

←

907

SEX IN MARRIAGE

MOST unhappy marriages are the result of mistakes in the sex relationship. This book supplies information usually unobtainable, to help married couples avoid these mistakes. . . .

The authors describe accurately and scientifically the physiology and functions of the complementary organs, discussing the matter of size and physical peculiarities; show what constitutes the different love arts of the man and wife, with definite, practical suggestions as to how the husband and wife can give each other the maximum pleasure in the embrace. So practical is their treatment that consideration is given even to such matters as the bad effects of starting the sex relationship in darkness. Among other subjects dealt with are: frequency of coitus, impotency, frigidity, sterility, venereal disease, intercourse during pregnancy, birth control and the menopause. . . .

Prof. Ernest R. Groves and Gladys Hoagland Groves are the editors of the Parents' Problems Department in *Junior Home Magazine*, and the authors of the following books: "Wholesome Childhood," "Wholesome Marriage," "Wholesome Parenthood" and "Parents and Children."


Prof. Groves is the editor of the Sociological Series published by Longmans, Green & Co.; and the author of these books: "Personality and Social Adjustment," "Social Problems and Education,"

"The Marriage Crisis," "The Drifting Home" and "Social Problems of the Family." He is

also the author, in collaboration with William F. Ogburn, of "American Marriage and Family Relationships," and in collaboration with Phyllis M.

Blanchard of "An Introduction to Mental

Hygiene."



SEX IN MARRIAGE

By
Ernest R. Groves
and
Gladys Hoagland Groves

Authors of
WHOLESOME CHILDHOOD, WHOLESOME PARENTHOOD
and WHOLESOME MARRIAGE

New York



1932

THE MACAULAY COMPANY

**COPYRIGHT, 1931, BY
THE MACAULAY COMPANY**

**First Printing, September, 1931
Second Printing, January, 1932**

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

To

ETHEL S. DUMMER

*wise in family and social leadership,
who expresses in service for human welfare
the confidence of inner vision.*

PREFACE

Sex in Marriage is written for the newly married, those about to be married, and those having marital difficulty because of sex maladjustment. It is a companion book to *Wholesome Marriage*, which dealt with the social and financial aspects of marriage, purposely leaving out sex for a later and more detailed treatment.

This book aims to give briefly and clearly information which an experience of twenty years in dealing with family problems has led the authors to think most useful in helping young people meet the sex demands of marriage. As the title suggests, *Sex in Marriage* is concerned only with the common and normal problems of marriage. It is not a general treatment of sex; it puts no stress upon sex pathology, and has nothing of interest for those who turn to it to stimulate a morbid curiosity. It is a straightforward attempt to give sex information of

PREFACE

value to those entering marriage, in the manner and the spirit of a book for beginners in gardening, housekeeping, or child nurture.

From every quarter comes criticism of marriage and modern family life. As was said in *Wholesome Marriage*, this criticism, born of matrimonial failure, cannot be charged exclusively to physical sex difficulty among the married, but no effort to help those who enter marriage can safely ignore sex.

Sex in Marriage is not a discussion of the sex education of children. That problem is treated in *Wholesome Parenthood*. The present book, although it emphasizes the influence of childhood upon adult sex life, keeps to its chosen path, the giving of practical help to those who are making the sex adjustments of marriage.

ERNEST R. GROVES.

GLADYS HOAGLAND GROVES.

Chapel Hill, N. C.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I SEX AND HAPPINESS	13
II THE BACKGROUND	41
III BEFORE MARRIAGE	78
IV THE SEX EQUIPMENT	105
V THE BEGINNINGS OF MARRIAGE	118
VI THE LOVE ART OF THE HUSBAND	143
VII THE LOVE ART OF THE WIFE	164
VIII SOME COMMON SEX PROBLEMS OF MARRIAGE	180
IX BIRTH CONTROL	208
X SEX AND LIFE	226
BOOKS SUGGESTED FOR ADDITIONAL READING . . .	249

SEX IN MARRIAGE

CHAPTER I

SEX AND HAPPINESS

HAPPINESS is not a right; it is an achievement. One cannot have happiness on demand, nor is one often denied it because of some conspiracy. Failure to be happy in marriage comes from fault. This may not be anything blameworthy, and only one of the partners may be responsible. Somewhere, however, when the promise of marriage ends in disappointment there has been blundering. Often at bedrock is ignorance or lack of specific information regarding sex. To give this information as clearly and in as practical a form as possible is the purpose of this book.

Sex is a meaningful word; it is never empty of suggestion. To every adult it brings feeling and thought that both face backward into the past and reach toward goals desired. Those who seek wholesome sex life must bring these influences of childhood and youth into harmony with the mature mo-

SEX IN MARRIAGE

tives of their marriage. As one passes from the single life into marriage he encounters sex in a new form. This makes possible a new expression of sex, but it does not wipe away influences that from early childhood have been shaping the sex life of the individual. This, perhaps, is the first important fact that the newly married must face.

To be well prepared to make the best use of the satisfactions marriage and sex offer, one must understand not only sex in a general sense, but one's own past sex career. These happenings of the past cannot be evaded by trying to insist that sex life starts with marriage. To believe this is merely to attempt self-deception. Sex is too interesting, whenever the child comes in contact with it in any form, not to make an impression. It starts thinking and attitudes that are built into the personality. No child matures without some knowledge of sex. A sex void is impossible, however stubbornly unwise elders may try to create one in the child. What we call innocence is not lack of interest in sex, but wrong ideas regarding it through lack of information.

SEX AND HAPPINESS

Past experiences that have to do with sex cannot be shaken off as one enters marriage, because they are in the very tissue of the person. He who marries begins the new relationship with sex attitudes already formed as a result of earlier happenings. It is because many fail to recognize this when they start marriage that we see the matrimonial voyage soon wrecked, or, what is nearly as pathetic, the fading of high hopes into the dull gray of monotonous association. To get the full yield of marital happiness, one must look to his past as well as try to make present adjustments. Indeed, these two interests become one, for successful adjustment is difficult if pre-marriage sex interests are ignored.

The first thing most of us discover as we dig into our sex history is that we have come to have a different attitude toward sex than toward anything else. It has captured our attention, but unless we have been most fortunate in our early training for life we have at least a tinge of shame, at times a mountain of guilt feeling, because of this interest. We are apt also to find that out of the past comes .

SEX IN MARRIAGE

a sense of mystery, even of fear, whenever our minds turn toward sex. It is well for us to notice that this is not the result of anything that comes out of our sex nature in itself, but is the product of the social influences that have played upon us from early childhood and have given a peculiar shading to everything sexual. To see this is to recognize that our wrong feeling regarding sex may easily rob us of the frank, full, and rich satisfaction that the marriage union ought to furnish.

How far we often drift from wholesome sex comes out clearly in the fact that we are wont to call physical sex the animal passion. It is true that we share sex with the lower animals; it is equally true that nature has been liberal in the investment that it has made in our sex life, giving us even on the physical level intense pleasure in the normal functioning of sex. Nevertheless, the fact remains that we do not stigmatize hunger or sleep as animal traits, though these also we share with the animals. There is a vast difference between the way animals eat and the habits of the cultured person who observes present-

SEX AND HAPPINESS

day conventions. Some one has wisely said that this measures the gulf between animal behavior and human civilization. We are, however, nearer the animal in our hunger than we are in our sex.

On the human level when sex intercourse is experienced in its fullness there is a multitude of physical sensations, a wealth of psychic feeling and thinking, an intimacy of social contact utterly removed from the experience of the animal. It is true that sex can sink to the lowest depth, but only by throwing aside its human characteristics. Wholesome sex is not an animal passion, but a human craving that in the good things it brings into life has no rival except its own by-product, parental feeling. It is important that the newly married see this clearly. Any reluctance in meeting one's sex needs frankly, any sneaking protest built by subterranean attitudes that make intercourse a sop to the animal remnant still found in human nature, means a bad start and for a time at least some loss of the happiness marriage has to offer. Nothing shows the strength of the genuine wholesomeness of sex more

SEX IN MARRIAGE

than the fact that, though multitudes every year begin marriage weighted down by a burden of wrong thought and training, through experience a considerable proportion of them are led into healthy attitudes and make their sex association the highest expression of intimacy and affection.

The word instinct appears often in discussions of sex. If there be any human instincts, sex is surely one of them. Nevertheless, the term sex instinct is misleading, if it makes any one suppose that among humans sex adjustment takes place in the automatic manner that it does among animals. The significance of the word instinct in connection with sex is the tribute it bears to the basic character of sex. Sex has been so fundamentally built into man and woman that it cannot be disregarded. But, however instinctively established, sex as it shows itself in any but the very earliest experiences has ceased to be an instinctive response, for it has been shaped by the personal experience of the individual. If this fact has added to the difficulties of human sex adjustment, it has at the same time enriched the expe-

SEX AND HAPPINESS

rience. Sex cannot be mechanical, fortunately; if it were it would have less to give us. The cultivated man and woman have no reason for looking with envious eyes upon the easier sex adjustment of the animal or even the simpler ones of the savage and the peasant type. Modern man and woman, healthy in body and in mind, can taste all the flavor of the cruder forms of physical sex and much besides. But to extract all the satisfaction sex has to offer means that sex intimacy must become an art; the closer it keeps to the instinct, the more meager its content and the greater the danger that the sex union will rapidly lose vigor and become monotonous and routine.

Whoever attempts to scrutinize his preparation for a happy sex union needs to bear in mind another fact that is often forgotten or even denied. By becoming civilized man has not been stripped of his sex vitality. Sex did not reach its greatest strength in the savage, nor has it diminished with man's increasing culture. Quite the contrary. There is evidence that the average adult in our time is more

SEX IN MARRIAGE

highly sexed than was the savage. There can be no question regarding the enlargement of the sex interest with man's social advance. Difficult as it is to compare periods so as to estimate justly the erotic element of the past as compared with the present, there can be no doubt that sex in our time has permeated every aspect of life, and that the social conditions which most of us met in our childhood and youth have stimulated our sex urge and relatively increased the meaning of sex for us as a means of achieving happiness. Modern life is shot through and through with sex. Nowhere in human conduct do we find it absent. Our values have a sex element. This is not a mark of degeneration, but the inevitable spreading of sex into every department of human activity. This means that sex has not been left behind on the animal level of its origin as man has developed, but that it, too, has been refined and made more complicated as the life of man and woman has become more complex. Sex has too much native vigor ever to be completely artificial, but it has become more intricate, yielding its greatest

SEX AND HAPPINESS

pleasures only to those prepared to deal with it. Were this not true there would be no place for a book like this and no one would need to seek information regarding marriage technique.

Sex does not merely concern the individual by himself; it has become one of the most important matters that concern people living together. Therefore, we find sex prominent in our morals, related to our health, tied to our religion, motivating business, appearing in every form of art, influencing our mental health, and supremely expressing itself in affection. We can escape from its omnipresence only by stepping outside of civilization. The amazing thing is that, though sex has so much to do with our personal and social happiness, we are loath to deal with it as we deal with other important things and to understand it in order to master it for our own good.

Few people are well prepared through early training to start the sex experience of marriage. As a consequence there is much blundering and unnecessary tension, emotional conflict and discontent. In contrast with this fact, to the truth of which many edu-

SEX IN MARRIAGE

cators can testify, there never was a time when more honest effort was made by thoughtful young men and women to know how to meet the sex demands of marriage. These young people do not merely seek happiness in marriage; they endeavor to find out how to achieve it. For them this book is written. It aims to help those who desire wholesome sex experience. It hews close to the line. There are many things of great importance concerning man's sex life that do not have any place in this book. There are other phases of the sex problem that can only be briefly noted. Fascinating as some of these problems, particularly in the field of the abnormal, are to the student of human sexology, they have no place, it seems to the authors, in this book. There are important facts that the newly married want to know, that they may be able to cope with their new sex experience. There are other things which they need to know if they are to get from their sex life together all that it has to give. To discuss mental abnormality, disease, malformation, and other problems outside the usual personal experience of

SEX AND HAPPINESS

average men and women would be likely to lead to a misunderstanding of the facts that concern their practical interests. Suggestions will be made as to how this material from biology, psychiatry, and medicine can be had for those who have special need of it.

Since sex has so large a place in human life and has so much to do with happiness, it seems strange that more effort has not been made to understand it, and to furnish married people with information that would help them to handle their sex problems wisely. The fact is that there is hardly any important concern of men and women about which there is such general ignorance as sex. This is not because information cannot be had, for there are many inexpensive and useful books. The trouble is that there is no realization by many people that they need specific knowledge regarding sex. Others do not know how to get what they would like to have, while still others, a very large group, refuse to face sex frankly and to deal with their ignorance as they would if it related to any other important matter.

SEX IN MARRIAGE

The result of this ignorance is that many marriages that ought to succeed fail. Not all of these ever find their way into the divorce court.

We have, of course, no way of measuring the unhappiness of those who find matrimony disappointing but do not go to the courts with their troubles. Probably the great majority of people who remain married stumble through their sex difficulties and arrive eventually at a tolerable adjustment. They do not, however, get from sex the satisfaction that is their due, and they live and die never knowing their losses. The great majority of these people are well meaning and are eager to use to the full their opportunities. They would profit immensely from a practical knowledge of sex. These people are not lacking in intelligence, but they are lacking in an intelligent knowledge of sex. Their ignorance at times seems almost incredible.

One of the most serious sex maladjustments that has ever come to my attention resulted from the marriage of a brilliant college professor with a woman who also was college trained. During several

SEX AND HAPPINESS

years of married life they had neither had a single experience of successful coitus nor any inkling that their sex union was unsuccessful. It was not until eventually the wife developed a serious mental illness that the true situation came to light. Both of these highly trained people knew, so far as sex was concerned, less than many children who have been given sex instruction by their parents. Ignorance is always costly, but it is probably true that if people generally realized how much suffering comes into life because of lack of knowledge of sex, adequate instruction would be given to every young person contemplating marriage. The most impressive results of this ignorance are those that appear in physical trouble of one kind or another. We are all too apt to forget the mental unrest, moral conflict, and general dissatisfaction with living that come from not knowing how to deal with sex.

By understanding the causes of this ignorance of sex we have a better insight into the obstacles that each of us faces when we try to meet our sex problems in a rational manner. In part, sex instruction

SEX IN MARRIAGE

is ignored because of a false confidence in the instinctive nature of sex. It is assumed that sex can take care of itself. It is found, however, from experience that even so basic a human appetite as that of hunger needs understanding and guidance. Out of this has come the wide attention that is now given to diet as a means of attaining health and efficiency.

The greatest cause of society's reticence regarding sex matters is fear. This shows itself in many forms. Some hesitate to handle sex openly, because they have never brought it under wholesome control themselves and cannot conceive of this being done by anybody else. Others, often reacting against their own early life, think that sex should be suppressed as much as is humanly possible, and they stupidly believe that they rid themselves of it by not giving it attention. Many are so impressed by the social dangers of selfishness in sex that they are always afraid that sex may escape from the control of convention, and they feel the safest policy is to keep sex under cover as much as possible.

SEX AND HAPPINESS

The immediate reason for the prevailing ignorance of sex is the unwillingness of parents to give their children instruction when questions are first asked regarding some sort of sex experience. Because of their own attitude toward sex, largely fear or shame, the parents cannot honestly meet the curiosity of their child. Once their policy of deceit and reticence starts, it is hard for them to break it. Sometimes conscience finally drives them to attempt to help their adolescent boy or girl, only to find that they are too late to win the child's confidence.

One of the dangers of this policy of withholding sex instruction from children is the possibility of a shock, from which innocence does not protect, since at any time sex may be accidentally forced upon the child by some older and possibly perverted person. We are not concerned in this book with sex pathology, but there are innumerable cases of adults normal in other respects who cannot erase from their emotional life the results of an early sex shock. This does not mean that they do not achieve sex adjust-

SEX IN MARRIAGE

ment, but only with effort and sometimes less perfectly than if they had been free from early contamination.

It is, of course, not true that information regarding sex is the only thing needful in achieving wholesome sex life. Information cannot cure selfishness, or eliminate vicious or pathological trends from the neurotic. Nevertheless, information is most helpful, and for those who have married with true affection it is the only thing needed to make a wholesome sex career possible. Even those who have been fortunate in their bringing up and have been given sex instruction by their parents need new information when they enter upon marriage.

Allied to ignorance is a wrong attitude toward sex. It is common for people to become afraid that they cannot control sex and to attempt to remove it forever and completely from their lives. This explains the coming of asceticism, the morbid antagonism to pleasure, in the early history of the Christian Church. Some of the Christian leaders were ascetic. This was not altogether strange, for they had close

SEX AND HAPPINESS

contact with the vice of Rome in its most degenerate days and felt that sex could not be kept within bounds. Indeed, sex and evil were to them about the same thing. This attitude persisted and was passed on, until, for some of the readers of this book, it has formed a background that has warped the meaning of sex. If so, these early influences must be reckoned with, for they are sure to hamper wholesome sex relations.

When the idea of evil has been tied to sex, underlying difficulties are embedded in the emotional life which mere information cannot greatly help. Thus it becomes necessary for the person entering marriage not only to know about sex, but to know as clearly as he can his inmost feelings regarding sex. Mere knowledge about sex technique, however valuable, cannot push aside wrong feelings implanted by the teaching of asceticism or by vicious influences and associates. There are exceptions, but almost always in nature pleasure is associated with things that are good and pain with what is harmful. Nowhere is this more forcefully true than in sex. If it

SEX IN MARRIAGE

were not so, the survival of the race would be endangered. Of course, this pleasurable-ness of sex leads to problems of fairness, moderation, and self-control, but it nevertheless attests the fundamental soundness of sex activity.

The conflict between the teachings of asceticism and the impulses of nature that encourage the sex activity of the individual leads some people to have a double attitude toward sex. They both want it and fear it; they go toward it and they run away. This two-faced attitude the psychoanalysts call ambivalency. In their work with people they discover it frequently, for it is often found in those who cannot adjust themselves happily to life. Even though it may not take so extreme a form, its presence even in a mild degree hampers wholesome sex life, and the newly married must face this fact squarely, especially women, since they are more likely to be troubled by these conflicting attitudes. It is, therefore, not enough to think about marriage in the prudential way that is so often recommended; one must also think over one's personal sex atti-

SEX AND HAPPINESS

tudes which will affect marriage. Thinking, indeed, has to be done before marriage, but even more it must be done afterwards. The danger of saying this is that a certain type of person will be led to over-investigation of himself and to the carrying on of what will be, in a degree at least, morbid searching. Here as elsewhere there is need of good sense.

Very few in our day and generation enter marriage without any blight from early happenings or wrong teaching. The danger of these can be easily exaggerated. There is an added risk at the time one marries, because just then emotions run strongly. One's motive for looking into the earlier experiences that influence sex feeling and thinking is not to pass judgment on oneself, but to understand what has happened that is likely to affect marriage. To develop a sense of blameworthiness or to feel penitent is distinctly unwholesome; to come to a franker understanding of oneself is good judgment and insurance against sex disaster.

Think how unfortunate those conscientious persons have been who have feared to let their minds

SEX IN MARRIAGE

dwell on sex in any way whatever, even though they were about to pass through the gates of matrimony, because they thought it would be a sin to let the subject enter their thought. Again and again I have known of a bad beginning to sex adjustment, because one or both of the members of the matrimonial alliance recoiled from any thinking about the sex part of the approaching marriage. Most of these persons expected to be happy, but wanted their eyes blinded when they entered into marriage.

It is a good thing for the engaged, just before they are married, to have a frank talk regarding sex, but it is a question whether either the man or the woman can safely confess earlier history; whatever is said is so likely to be exaggerated, with a resulting misinterpretation of past experiences. Indeed, the reader cannot be too strongly cautioned not to attempt a personal inquisition of his own history for the purpose of passing blame. There are trends in courtship that encourage this, but they must be resisted.

One merely wishes to know one's past so one

SEX AND HAPPINESS

may be well equipped to deal with present opportunities. In spirit one is like the person who is asking for information about the road he must travel on his approaching automobile trip, that he may the more easily make his journey. Let it be remembered also that it is not what has happened but one's reaction to it that is significant. It has been found that even such a terrible happening as rape in the early life of the female child may leave no serious emotional scar if her elders deal with it wisely. The candidate for marriage needs to know his past, merely because it will reveal his present sex characteristics.

Without health, happiness is difficult. There is constantly growing evidence that sex and health are intimately related. This is what one would naturally think. It would be strange indeed if so fundamental a function as sex represents to the physical body should have no important influence upon the well-being of the body as a whole. In view of this fact it would be remarkable that sex has until now received so little attention from the point of view of physical

SEX IN MARRIAGE

health, were it not that the social taboo against sex has been so strong.

In the past, such discussion as there has been of sex in relation to health has been almost entirely devoted to the problem of venereal disease, with a slighter attention to sexual excesses. Even in the medical schools we are told that there has been very little attention given to sex, although venereal disease has properly had a prominent place in the instruction.

The authors of this book have both been impressed by the fact that in taking their yearly physical examination, which has been searching in its thoroughness in regard to most of the functions of the body, no question has ever been asked regarding sex, aside from the routine question usually asked of males, "Have you ever been infected with venereal disease?" We ourselves have had to ask for information we felt it important to have, and have gathered the impression that the patient as well as the examining doctor seldom brings up any specific question regarding sex. Yet no competent student

SEX AND HAPPINESS

of physiology would deny that sex has a major place among the influences that have to do with health, such as digestion, elimination, sleep and nervous vigor.

That this neglect of sex cannot continue if preventive medicine is to assume its full obligation is clear from recent investigations. We now know that there is a third function that the sex organs perform which must be added to reproduction and the pleasure of sex stimulation. Sex organs for both the man and the woman must be included in that list of the glands of the body which recent medical discovery has elevated to a foremost place in the physiological system. There seems to be an interrelation between the sex glands and the other glands, as well as a direct contribution of the sex organs to the blood stream. We have long known in a general way that both the male and the female sex organs had a decided influence on body structure, since their early removal brought about such decided changes in body growth. Our conception of this influence has now been enlarged, and little by little we are gain-

SEX IN MARRIAGE

ing insight into the contribution of sex to the general functioning of the body.

There can be no gainsaying the fact that the body is prepared by its maturity to carry on sex activity. It is equally true that man has traveled too far from the animal level for him to treat sex only as a biological matter. There are reasons enough for the postponement or even in some cases for the abandonment of the thought of sex activity, but this does not change the fact that the body has through its normal growth arrived at the point where it is ready for sex experience. As a consequence there must be for many of the unmarried a period of struggle, either conscious or hidden from thought, which, like any inner conflict, registers itself in the nervous system. This means that a healthier life is offered the man or woman who with maturity can enter marriage. This is a matter that must be understood clearly. It is false to say that one who remains continent cannot be healthy; it is even untrue to say that physical sex brings stress to all who are not married. Fortunately, the need of sex activity is not

SEX AND HAPPINESS

awakened in some people until they have actually started sex experience, but the fact remains that the most wholesome situation, even from a physical viewpoint, is that which permits the young man and woman with the proper development of body to enter upon sex relations in marriage.

Fair-minded men and women, whatever their sex tension, cannot, whether married or unmarried, let their appetites trample the rights of others. There are, therefore, imperious motives for the faithful following by some of a policy of continence, but it must not be supposed that this program represents as desirable a condition for physical well-being as would come with a happy marriage. It does not represent living in accordance with nature's way of doing things, and for most normal adults it means strain and restlessness that antagonize, if ever so slightly, the vigor of living. The danger of the sedentary life in contrast with out-of-door activity is constantly emphasized by preventive medicine. Similarly, the physical and psychical disadvantages of an unsatisfied love life, including sex fellowship,

SEX IN MARRIAGE

are now being brought to the surface more and more forcefully by psychology and psychiatry, as greater knowledge is gained of human experience.

The ordeal of those who do not marry or whose marriage turns out to be a physical disappointment can be easily exaggerated. In many cases it is clearly the feeling of inferiority, especially in the woman who has had no chance to marry, that must be charged as the chief offender against content.

Unless we can be happy with other people we cannot be happy at all. In the social experiences that mean so much to all of us sex enters. Indeed, it is next to impossible for men and women in their most casual meetings not to react differently than if they were with some member of their own sex. This is, however, a small matter when compared with the other fact that normal sex experience requires an intimacy of two people. This is the first and fundamental coöperation. Thus wholesome sex compels that regard for the other person which is the taproot of all social attainments in our life together. Of all the values that come to us from this

SEX AND HAPPINESS

regard for others, which nature is determined shall at one point at least not be disregarded, the home is the chief. It brings, aside from the physical sex pleasures associated with it, satisfactions that reach deepest into human craving and thus stand the wear of time. Sex is drawn into a massive web of interest and refined into affection. This consolidation, through family experience, of physical sex and affection, especially when it is reinforced by parenthood, is the peak of social achievement.

It is fortunate for human happiness that sex is both tenacious and humanizing. There need be no apology for linking as we do sex and happiness. Sex has to function in happiness or in human coitus it shrivels. It cannot be a duty. It is possible for the female, without having pleasure, to go through a semblance of sex union, but for the male even this deception is impossible. Sex, to be sure, ranges over great distances and mere pleasure seeking often sinks to low levels. It is not to be expected that all who seek the goal of happiness should arrive, but their failure must not blind us to their urge. We

SEX IN MARRIAGE

seek happiness because we are human. We enter marriage expecting happiness. We look to sex to increase our happiness. Mere expectations are not sufficient. Here as elsewhere in life success comes from knowledge and from character. Neither husband nor wife can get from their physical union all it has to give if they are ignorant of the conditions of wholesome marriage. Nor does the mere knowing of facts suffice, important as they may be. Character is also required, and without it mere physical sex pleasure proves illusive as a means of achieving a satisfying happiness.

CHAPTER II

THE BACKGROUND

THE reader impressed with the importance of knowing his early sex life in order to make marriage adjustments easier and more satisfying may be asking himself at this point, How shall I begin? What in my childhood should I look for? A clear answer to these questions is the purpose of this chapter.

It is well at the outset to recognize that there may be considerable reluctance to make any genuine effort to look backward into one's own sex history. This, of course, shows the attitude toward sex that has come from the experiences of childhood and youth. If sex is so important a matter for newly married persons and is influenced by the happenings before marriage, why should any one hesitate to go back into his past? To discourage any morbid reaction to this statement, I hasten to say that unwill-

SEX IN MARRIAGE

ingness to dig into the past does not necessarily mean that any very significant thing has been lodged in the earlier life. It merely testifies to an unhealthy feeling regarding sex which has been socially created and needs to give way to a more wholesome feeling. This is what the psychoanalysts call "reëducation." This really means bringing up ideas that have a large amount of emotional content and putting them under the scrutiny of a more mature judgment so that they no longer have clinging to them the feeling that makes a wholesome sex attitude difficult.

In the plainest way possible I wish to impress the reader that he or she is not looking backward as a sort of penance in view of an approaching marriage to discover some terrible thing that has happened. Even if any serious thing has happened, which will rarely be true, it is to be dealt with in the same calm spirit as the most trivial occurrences and to be looked at rationally without a shred of guilt feeling, however strong one's regret, so that it will not become an obstacle to happiness.

THE BACKGROUND

It must also be recognized that reluctance to make an appraisal of one's pre-marriage sex experience does not mean that if the past is left alone it may be extinguished. If this were true it might be wisest not to dig up past history. In some form or other, attitudes of thought, born of the past, are bound to intrude themselves later in marriage, although the person who has been reluctant to deal with them openly may not sense the fact that they are at the bottom of any special sex difficulty that arises in marriage. It is best before marriage or in the early days of matrimony to have a reckoning with one's past, so that the experiences of childhood and youth may help rather than hinder one's matrimonial adventure.

In getting acquainted with one's own sex history one has to ask definite questions:

1. What were my sex experiences in early childhood? It can be safely assumed that there was a starting place in sex interest and that this can be brought back to memory. It would be an extraordinary child that did not have any interest whatsoever

SEX IN MARRIAGE

in anything pertaining to sex. It is true that sometimes when parents are particularly eager to keep the child immature, sex awakening is delayed. This is not always the consequence that comes from such a parental policy, for at other times it stimulates a sense of mystery and the sex interest, even though hidden, becomes precocious, and in time attains unusual strength.

It is amazing how parents fool themselves and refuse to recognize the natural curiosity of their children in matters of sex. A mother of several children once insisted to me that her boys and girls, ranging from six to twelve, had never shown the slightest interest in anything pertaining to sex. At the time she told me this I knew she was mistaken, because her boy of ten had just undressed a neighbor's girl of six, in order to satisfy his curiosity, but I merely tried to make her understand that it was her own willful blindness that had led her to suppose them uninterested in matters of sex. Not many years later this same mother traveled many miles to consult me with reference to a sex delinquency into

THE BACKGROUND

which her oldest daughter had fallen, and which finally caused her dismissal from college.

Sex curiosity is practically universal in children, and it would be strange if it were not so. It is important, however, to recognize that this curiosity is nothing different from the usual questioning of the child in order to get the meaning of things that have attracted his attention. It comes to be different in a multitude of cases merely because it is treated differently. It is this that gives us our first clue in the approach to our personal sex history.

When and where did the first urgent curiosity about sex appear, and what happened? Was there any special suggestion or stimulation that brought sex consciousness? More important than the answers to those questions is, How was the curiosity handled by those who were asked for information? Did they reply by punishment, rebuke, postponement, evasion, or downright lying? Most important of all, however, is to discover what effect this parental behavior had upon one's own feeling and thinking. Did it

SEX IN MARRIAGE

give sex a bad odor? Did it tie the idea of shame to everything sexual? Did it force separation between parent and child? Did it lead to excessive determination to discover the nature of this mysterious thing that produced so unexpected a reaction?

Many trivial expressions of curiosity and insignificant events related to sex have doubtless slipped from the memory and cannot be brought back to consciousness in this effort to trace from the beginning one's development of sex attitude. However, the more spectacular and therefore more important events can be recalled. Starting with the earliest memory it is well to run through one's personal history. This will usually be easier in the case of the man because, having been less coerced by social standards, his boyhood sex experiences were more clear. In the case of the woman there has usually been more social pressure during girlhood that led to a disguising of the sex features associated with her experiences. It is this difference that has made the sex life of the

THE BACKGROUND

American woman more difficult in matrimony than that of the man. The mature person who honestly looks backward soon uncovers the sex element that was present in his childhood happenings after he had begun to realize that older people were frowning upon this special sort of curiosity.

There is need in this searching of childhood to gather up the wrong ideas that were instilled. It is amazing how distorted sex becomes, especially to the woman who has either gone through the deceptions practiced upon children or has had information withheld. I would never have imagined that what I know from personal confessions could be true. For example, would any one suppose that a very thoughtful girl, brought up by conscientious parents, could have carried even into college the belief that pregnancy was a major operation which permitted the child to be born through the navel, or that a student of promise, on graduating from a university where she had taken considerable zoology, could know so little about reproduction among humans as to become pregnant without her

SEX IN MARRIAGE

knowledge? The first is not uncommon, and the latter experience is exactly what happened in a case recently brought to me.

I find that it is an extraordinarily prevalent idea, even among women who have had college training, that coitus is something painful to the woman. Such an idea is much more common among women than the sophisticated would ever suppose, and in spite of recent frankness it is true that a considerable number of young women even now pass through childhood and youth with the most mistaken ideas regarding sex. Some of these girls have read books of counsel written by those who are anxious to help the adolescent pass safely through her difficult years. Somehow this material has not had the simplicity or the directness needed to replace erroneous ideas. If men, through the greater freedom of boyhood, come to have a better idea of the marital status, they do not by any means escape error.

I have found among young men that one of the most common notions contrary to fact is the belief that a woman cannot conceive except at definite

THE BACKGROUND

times of the month. Another is the idea that unless the woman's sex contact brings her an orgasm she cannot become pregnant. These errors are particularly dangerous for those who through confidence in them enter into promiscuous relations. I have also been impressed by the illustrations of wrong thinking on the part of men regarding venereal disease, of which I have been told by medical specialists. These examples of the false notions of men are merely on a somewhat more mature level than those of women.

It is seldom that any child travels away from his early experience without being laden with a considerable number of false ideas about sex, which, if uncorrected, persist frequently even to the time of marriage. It is rare that there are no ideas at all. In addition to this is the pathetic loneliness the child experiences in many cases in which sex becomes a good deal of a puzzle. In some way the most natural questions have been awakened, but instead of receiving the expected explanation, the child is rebuked or even severely punished. At once he closes

SEX IN MARRIAGE

a certain part of his life to the elders whose criticism he fears. This is more consequential than that his ideas are false, for even the conscientious parent who deliberately tries to help his child discovers that, do his best, he cannot prevent misinterpretations and misunderstandings by the child, so that the most carefully instructed boy or girl must be patiently dealt with and little by little led into perfect understanding. Those children who are shut away from adult sources of sex information are sometimes thrown into circumstances where perverted, neurotic feeling and thinking get started, and there is nothing to correct their false steps in sex development.

It is important to notice how different children are with reference to sex. Some have marked curiosity, some have little. Some require considerable explanation, some are satisfied with meagerness. Some turn away from sex quickly when they receive any degree of understanding, while others probe into the subject and think of it constantly. The temperament of the child, his environment, in-

THE BACKGROUND

cluding his other interests, and particularly the isolated events which started sex consciousness, all have to do with his peculiar characteristics.

And so these are the important questions one has to ask regarding his early childhood experiences: When did I have my first awakening in sex? How was it treated? What effect did it have upon me? What were the other important events in my sex development? How did they influence me? What wrong ideas did I get regarding sex as I grew up? What ideas have I now of whose truth I am uncertain? Was I given freedom to talk over my sex difficulties? If not, did I brood over sex by myself? Was my interest in sex little or much? Was it constant or intermittent? What finally seems to have been my sex characteristic?

2. What was the influence of the home upon my sex development? Usually our first impressions come from our family contact. Although not always true with reference to sex, this is probably the most usual occurrence. Even when the household does not supply the first impressions in the growing sex life,

SEX IN MARRIAGE

it does have, sooner or later, a very great influence. There is also much that comes out of the relationships of the various members of the family that concerns the developing sex life of the child. One of the first of these happenings is likely to be the reaction of the child when he discovers why babies come. This is an important matter because he generally has already had some idea, even though it be faint, regarding sex. Now he has to recognize that his parents have some sort of intimacy, something happens between them, which brings about the coming of a baby. If shame has already been applied to sex, there follows a considerable struggle because the parents seem debased to the child for having anything to do with sex, especially if their attitude toward it when the child has presented to them his curiosity has been one that has made the entire subject of sex seem unclean. A very common result of this shock that comes from getting the notion of the meaning of pregnancy is for the child to regard one of the parents as the victim of the other. Probably this is most often the mother, and resentment

THE BACKGROUND

arises that the father should be so cruel to her. If the child by accident witnesses any intercourse between his parents this feeling of protest against the father may become unusually strong, since, misinterpreting what he sees, he is very likely to believe that the father is doing something hurtful against the will of the mother.

Another common result of new and more accurate information regarding pregnancy is for the child to feel jealousy against either the father or the mother, more commonly the former. He resents their sharing between them so intimate a secret from which he has been shut off. This might appear a rather trivial matter, because sooner or later the basis of this jealousy will have disappeared. Unfortunately, it is true, however, that jealousy is a habit. Once started, it is easy for it to continue. The material upon which it feeds changes, of course, with the passing of circumstances, but once the habit itself is established it grows stronger and stronger if it be constantly exercised.

Thus the child who early becomes the victim of

SEX IN MARRIAGE

jealousy may carry his bad habit through life, and then marriage becomes for him a risky thing, since it affords so many opportunities for the stimulating of his fault. This is discussed in some detail in *Wholesome Marriage*. What we now need to realize is that jealousy often comes about through some sex element in the family association.

Another important sex happening which shows itself in family life is what we call fixation. Here the child ties himself emotionally too securely to one of his parents. There are innumerable cases in which the analysis of a personality difficulty has shown that this relationship had a sex significance for either the parent or the child, or even for both of them. The parent may flood the child with unrestrained tenderness, because of an unsatisfactory sex relationship in marriage. The child may bring his awakening interest in sex into association with his feeling of love for his father or his mother, and by his fixation start the foundation for an unnatural or a restrained sex career when once he marries.

It is patently unwise to forget to scrutinize home

THE BACKGROUND

influences as they have operated on underlying sex attitudes. Here are some of the questions that may well be asked: When did I first associate the sex act with the union of my parents? What was my reaction to my new knowledge? Was it consistent with my former feelings toward my father and my mother? Did I have in any degree at the start a feeling of jealousy because they had an intimacy I could not share? Did I feel that their intercourse was inconsistent with what they had taught me regarding sex? Did I develop a fixation on either my father or my mother? How long did this last and how strong was it? Does it still influence my feeling? If so, how is it likely to show itself in my contemplated marriage?

3. How did school influence my sex development? School life, especially public school life, brings together all sorts of children from every variety of home. There is nothing that depicts this diversity in the character of family life more than the sex behavior of different children. We are altogether too likely to consider a good home one that has comfort

SEX IN MARRIAGE

and security, and in which children receive the advantages of a large income. It has been found, however, that undernourished children come even from wealthy homes where there has been neglect in the feeding care of the child, or where ignorance of diet or discipline has prevented the child from receiving suitable food. It is still more true in regard to sex that families which would seem good in other respects must often be marked low in their efficiency at this point. Out of this comes the fact that some of the worst children in their attitude toward sex come from what we call the better homes. Bad sex development is different from poor posture and undernourishment in that it does not affect merely the child who suffers. The precocious or vicious child has a peculiar desire to contaminate other children, especially those who seem most innocent. This, when brought to its lowest terms, seems to be due to a sense of inferiority which urges the child to use his opportunity to shock other children as a means of winning power. He becomes the psychic bully who, by forcing sex upon other children, is prominent and

THE BACKGROUND

even feared. Thus it happens that the sex instructor in many schools is the most vicious and sexually precocious boy or girl in the group. Injured himself, he spoils others.

One of the commonest evidences of the unwholesome sex training of many children in America is the great amount of pornographic words and diagrams placed by boys, and even girls, on the walls of the schools, especially in the basement or out-houses which furnish the necessary secrecy. It is easy to exaggerate the significance of these diagrams for those who make them, since often for the individual concerned they are a primitive method of sublimating awakened sex curiosity. To other children they become stimulants of sex and even means of shocking. They are the bane of teachers, especially those who are covering their own sex unrest by excessive prudery. Pornographic material may not be confined to the artistic efforts of the children themselves, for every little while a school is found where adults, without the knowledge of teachers or parents, have exploited sex interests of the children

SEX IN MARRIAGE

by selling them books or pictures of the most vicious sort.

Perhaps the greatest significance of this childish interest in pictures and descriptions of sex organs is its revelation of the meager training present-day education provides along lines of sex. Whatever else is true, the child's behavior is an indictment of our present stupid attempt to evade sex training for life. Probably the worst thing that happens at school is the rehearsal by the youngsters of their sex experiences. In one school to which I was asked to come to help straighten out a situation that had involved nearly all the children in the school, it was found that a very pretty and innocent looking girl, who was soon shown to be a moron, an adopted child of unknown parentage, had spread the knowledge of vice throughout the school. It is hardly possible to believe that one child could have scattered so widely her bad influence and created an atmosphere loaded with suggestion. Such, however, was the fact, and with her removal the situation gradually cleared.

Once I was asked to give advice because it had

THE BACKGROUND

been found that the councillor of a summer camp had been encouraging vice among the boys in his charge. Working on this problem I discovered that the councillor was himself a victim of a homosexual teacher in one of the prominent high schools of that state. A little investigation revealed that over a series of years this teacher had been leading promising boys into vice and had caused an enormous amount of sex difficulty. Since he was an able teacher of good repute, it was difficult to persuade the authorities that he was secretly a menace to the community.

It would be unfair to think of schools merely as places where vicious influences spring that discolor developing sex life, since some of the best ones give instruction, especially in biology, that brings help and insight to many children. Sex instruction badly done, with suggestions of self-consciousness in the teacher, does more harm than good, and it is this, perhaps, that retards the development of such courses. When they are rightly given by the appropriate person they become positive influences for

SEX IN MARRIAGE

good, and often supply information that the home ought to have given but did not.

Here are specific questions that need to be considered in any self-examination, to uncover one's sex attitude resulting from school experiences: Who were the children who influenced me in my sex thinking and conduct? How much impression did I receive from them? Was I shocked during my early school life? If so, how lasting was this attitude? To what extent was I brought in contact with pornographic material, and did this have any harmful effects? What instruction or counsel did I receive from my teachers that influenced for good or evil my growing sex development?

4. What influences in the development of my sex attitudes came from the church or from religion? The church as a rule does not directly concern itself with matters of sex. There are some extremely forward-looking pastors who provide instruction, especially for those about to be married. But it is rare that churches tackle sex in any direct fashion. The efforts of preachers to discuss sex rather frankly

THE BACKGROUND

have sometimes opened them to the suspicion of being unwisely interested in such problems. This questioning has not always been without good reason. However, although the church does not often deal directly with sex, it does from time to time, through its activities, influence the sex development of boys and girls. Sometimes Bible passages containing the frank expressions of early Hebrew literature are added to the pornographic collection of boys and less often of girls. Sometimes the zeal of the evangelist has resulted in the compelling, neurotic thoughts that in some cases recorded in pathological literature have ended in morbid day-dreaming and false accusation.

I have known religious organizations carried on for young boys and girls that were supported by some of the children because this permitted their coming together and eventually after the meeting entering upon sex play. The most significant result, however, that has come to most of us from church influence has been the suggestion so often given by preachers that sex is in itself something low and

SEX IN MARRIAGE

earthly and must be looked upon as an enemy of spiritual attainment. Sometimes this is a conscious and morbid reaction of badly disorganized personalities, while at other times it is merely an unfortunate use of terminology that carries an impression quite contrary to the real feeling of the preacher.

The effect varies with temperament, some children getting no impression of any lasting quality, while others have sunk into their feelings in early years a suspicion or even a disgust of sex which leads to a vexing problem if marriage takes place. Just now it seems to be difficult for the church to deliver this ascetic attitude to young people, but in isolated, extremely conservative churches there is still enough of morbid Puritanism lingering to create a problem for a great many growing children and youths.

It would be most unfair to the churches to suppose that their idealism, their emphasis upon unselfishness and right living, even when not directly applied to sex conduct, contributes nothing to the development of right attitudes toward marriage.

THE BACKGROUND

It would be unwise, therefore, to leave out of our reckoning the effect of early church teaching. Some of the questions that need answering are these: What did I get from Sunday school or from church that influenced my sex life? Were morbid and ascetic attitudes presented? If so, how did I react to them? Are they in any way still embedded in my outlook upon life? Was I led to feel that sex was something animal and necessarily opposed to spiritual values? Did I receive pertinent suggestions as to the meaning of marriage? Has this led to overstrain, with the risk that my eagerness to be conscientious may be overdone? Was I given teaching in the church that will make it harder or easier for me to establish a just and equitable fellowship with my mate in my family relationship?

5. How was I trained in modesty in early life and what are its consequences? This is an important question. There has been in the past such eagerness to bring children into accord with convention that there has often been an unfortunate overstressing of modesty. One cannot know many families with-

SEX IN MARRIAGE

out being acquainted in the concrete with the process by which this is accomplished. It occurs mostly in the case of the girl. Her attention is constantly called to the most accidental and insignificant display of her underclothing or even, in extreme cases, to any abandonment of posture. Thus she is made early conscious of the need of observing something her elders are constantly telling her is modesty. How far this can go is illustrated by such a happening as the bleeding to death of a young mill employee, who refused to have a cut in her leg bound up by any of the male workers, and who died before the doctor could arrive.

Such extreme cases of modesty do not reveal the social harm that is commonly brought into the life of girls by the prudish attitude of parents. If, before marriage, sex and everything pertaining to it is made to seem a thing of shame that must be hidden at any cost, it is hopeless to expect a ceremony to wipe out unfavorable impressions and give the man or woman a fair opportunity to live a genuine and vigorous sex life in marriage.

THE BACKGROUND

I doubt if anything enters the life of the young girl more insidious in its basic trend toward morbid sex than the constant nagging of some mothers, and even fathers, when their girl abandons herself to play in the same way as would a boy. So long as this difference is observed in the early training of boys and girls, we must expect some American women to find difficulty in making reasonable sex adjustments in marriage.

This policy that has so long prevailed with reference to the stressing of modesty in the early life of the girl cannot be defended by saying that it is a means of protecting her virtue. Right training does not require the building of morbid attitudes for the purpose of moral security. Wholesome training refrains from drawing attention to things remotely connected with sex and avoids making children self-conscious.

To satisfy the normal curiosity of boys and girls in each other's body structure, nothing works so satisfactorily as to let them see each other as naturally without clothes as with them, so that from in-

SEX IN MARRIAGE

fancy up to the approach of puberty they are accustomed to the nakedness of others, during family bathing and dressing hours. This does not attract attention to sex as some might suppose, but instead leads to comparative indifference and a dismissal of the curiosity that is so compelling in children for whom sex has been made a mystery. The increasing practice of letting little boys and girls play together in the sunlight entirely naked, that they may get the full benefit of the ultra-violet rays, is most beneficial and should teach backward parents the absurdity of their former policy. How strong curiosity can be in little children merely because of the concealment and mystery that keeps from them knowledge of the sex construction of the opposite type can be appreciated by any adult who has once passed through the experience. If this drive of curiosity, the most natural thing in the world, is tied to self-blame for having such interests, the source of double feeling toward sex is established, which is certain to make marriage intimacy somewhat of a struggle.

It is not at all difficult in practice to allow great

THE BACKGROUND

freedom within the family and at the same time guard the child against exposure in association with others that will lead to criticism. It is easy to explain that one of the things the family gives us is a freedom we are not supposed to have elsewhere. As a matter of fact, the very little child learns this by observing things done and talked about within the family circle that are not carried to outside contacts.

Perhaps the most harmful effect that comes from what has been the conventional attitude regarding modesty is the feeling of many women that they are expected to play the difficult rôle of both enjoying sex and at the same time abstaining from the abandonment that the male takes for granted. Men, unfortunately, also come up out of their early experiences with the idea that the right sort of woman thinks of sex as a more or less necessary evil and has a great modesty which he has to break down to have sex intercourse with her at all. Many a man even goes so far as to suppose that lack of this unwholesome attitude in a woman is evidence of her early

SEX IN MARRIAGE

laxity and on this ground becomes suspicious of his wife's faithfulness.

In looking backward into past sex experience, one must not neglect this matter of modesty. What was the family attitude toward modesty? Did it lead to self-consciousness on my part? If at any time I encountered shock because of some accidental exposure, was I also blamed? Did I continue into youth this early feeling about modesty? Have I any deep-seated prudish feeling that will make it difficult for me to be frank and to abandon myself in sex intimacy?

6. In passing through youth, what happened to me of significance to my sex development? Youth is for most young people a considerable strain, and in this sex usually plays a prominent part. It is wrong to think of adolescence as difficult merely on account of sex development, for it is a complicated experience; the beginning of independence and self-direction necessarily adds difficulties to adjustment. It is also a time teeming with physical disturbances due to the rapidly changing structure of the body.

THE BACKGROUND

But deepest of all is the fundamental fact that social maturity and sex maturity do not keep step with each other, but the latter gets ahead of the former. The earlier the marriage, the less the stress; the more the marriage is delayed, the greater the distance between what the body is ready to have and what it is permitted. The problem is even more difficult, for there is evidence that what the body seems structurally prepared for, it had better not have, if the effect of early indulgence is considered from its total effect upon the growing personality. This is strikingly true of the girl if pregnancy is included. Children of fourteen have become mothers, but the experience decidedly antagonizes their physical health. Aside, therefore, from the social postponement of marriage, there is a divergence in nature itself which permits the body to be ready to reproduce before the exercise of this function is for its good.

In youth there are four common ways by which young men and women meet their problems. One is retreat. This means that they do their utmost to

SEX IN MARRIAGE

keep away from everything that has to do with sex, and go so far in countless instances as to build up a guilt feeling with reference to their natural interest in sex, so strong as to keep them from anything with a sexual flavor.

A second method of adjustment may be properly called play. Here sex is used as a means of pleasurable contact without going so far as to be a serious form of sex contact. Here, at present, ranks much of the petting which in its frank expression troubles and frightens the elders who misinterpret its meaning. A third attempt is that of sublimation, forcing sex energy to pass into other interests. Sometimes the second and third are joined together. At other times, religion, aesthetics, or athletics are made to take the place of sex, and an overwhelming zest in something else throws sex more or less under cover. Thus energy that would flow out in sexual experience is switched over into a channel that the conscious mind approves. Fourth, there always have been, as there now are, a considerable number of young men and women, always more men than

THE BACKGROUND

women, who enter during youth into the complete sex act.

It is not difficult to analyze past experiences. One must keep in mind, however, that it is not what has happened, but what it has done to the feeling and thought about sex, that is chiefly important for the person who has entered or soon expects to enter matrimony. It is seldom that all the sex experiences have consistently fallen into any one of the four groups mentioned. In any case, whatever has been the history of one's youth, it needs to be faced clearly, in as objective a manner as one ever can think of events that have fallen within one's own personal experience.

7. Masturbation. There is, perhaps, nothing connected with sex that has been so misunderstood or that has caused so much unnecessary worry and guilt feeling as masturbation. It is startling to find a graduate student who has studied both psychology and sociology in one of our best universities still asking whether masturbation carried on in early years had brought about a tendency toward in-

SEX IN MARRIAGE

sanity. The first thing to know about masturbation is that no authority anywhere in the world to-day believes that masturbation causes insanity.

Masturbation is a habit, but it has such different significance in childhood, youth, and maturity that it is unfortunate that the same term has to be used. In childhood it is a spontaneous habit which is nothing more than play. It does not have related to it any erotic thinking, at least at first, and is in the beginning not unlike the child's playing with his fingers or his toes. The child has merely discovered a part of the body that brings him mildly pleasant sensations when he handles it.

About the time of puberty, masturbation comes to have an erotic character that makes it different from the earlier play of the child. At this time there is apt to be a protest of conscience against the carrying on of the habit, and the recognition that it is frowned upon by older people, so that the adolescent who masturbates generally suffers moral conflict and shame. Somebody tells him that it is a dangerous practice which will undermine his health

THE BACKGROUND

and destroy his mind. This is an inexcusable exaggeration of the ill effects that come to the nervous system, even when there has been excessive masturbation. In most cases there is no evidence that the habit has done any physical harm.

The continuation of the habit after maturity, however, is regarded by many medical authorities as evidence of a neurotic, badly adjusted personality. It may in this third stage be highly neurotic and usually carries with it a tremendous feeling of guilt. When the environment is itself abnormal, as in prison life, masturbation may more justly be regarded as a substitute for what would otherwise be preferred. It is questionable whether masturbation is ordinarily a more abnormal sex experience than coitus without affection. It at least has the advantage of not deceiving the individual into thinking that he has a customary experience, whereas the male who visits a prostitute may suppose that the commercialized sex intercourse he generally gets is the same sort of thing that he may expect in matrimony.

SEX IN MARRIAGE

It is clear that in reviewing one's life one must observe a distinction between the play of the child, the sex experimenting of puberty, and the habitual masturbating of the mature person. In the first two cases at least it must be considered a habit, not a perversion.

If these things are true, some readers will ask, Why has there been such a severe criticism of masturbation? In part this has been due to the lack of knowledge of many who honestly supposed that masturbation even in a child was the expression of an evil mind and a perversion of instincts that would injure mentality. In part the protest against masturbation registers the shame that has come from personal experience in attempting to control in youth the strong impulses to get rid of sex tension by handling one's own body. It is also true that the conventional attitude is a clumsy way of recognizing the dangers involved in continuing the habit, which, although usually harmless during infancy, becomes in neurotic persons a serious burden to the person after maturity. In contrast with normal

THE BACKGROUND

coitus of the adult, masturbation is infantile in character. It is depressing, whereas wholesome intercourse is refreshing and relaxing; it leads to self-depreciation, while satisfactory coitus increases one's self-confidence.

Although no one can speak with statistical certainty, it is believed by all students that masturbation is a habit extremely common among boys, so common as to make some say that every boy has been at some time addicted to it. This statement represents, of course, nothing but personal opinion, and many close to the lives of boys consider it an exaggeration. In the case of girls, the question is a little more difficult to answer. This is because there are such a number of ways in which the girl may produce sex sensation. In many cases it is hard to be sure that what she does has a sex significance. The probability is that masturbation is much more common among girls than has been in the past supposed, but not so common as it is among boys. Possibly, also, it does not have such consequences in creating shame, because there is not the same frank

SEX IN MARRIAGE

realization that what is being done has to do with sex. I have known of young girls who have carried on practices together that sophisticated persons would recognize as being sexual in character, but this was not understood by the persons themselves until a later time. The wide spread of sex sensation in the female and the lack of sex knowledge in many girls make possible this unrecognized sex conduct which rarely happens to boys.

It is well for those who seek wholesome sex adjustment in marriage not to flinch from self-examination with reference to masturbation in early childhood and through puberty. If the habit has become so confirmed as to have possession of the person it must be frankly recognized that it may make marriage disappointing. There is plenty of evidence, for instance, that women who are frigid in normal intercourse are frequently confirmed masturbators. It is also true that some men so much prefer masturbation to normal coitus that they find marriage dissatisfying. It is probable also that those who have masturbated a great deal over a long

THE BACKGROUND

period of time tend to reach the sex orgasm too quickly to give the partner in the act a reasonable time to come to the climax. Of course this is more common among men, and it is a distressing fact because, once the man has discharged, he is usually unable to continue the act long enough to bring his wife satisfaction. Thus, as we shall see at a later time, she is constantly stimulated but never satisfied, and intercourse becomes for her a torture against which she deliberately sets herself, so that she may resist even the stimulation that starts her toward the climax which she never or seldom reaches.

It is of the greatest importance, in looking back into one's early life, that masturbation, if it has been present, should be treated with the same objective good sense as it would be by any well-informed person in dealing with some other person's experience rather than his own.

CHAPTER III

BEFORE MARRIAGE

WE are not destitute of books that give useful advice regarding courtship. On the whole, however, the books that are written to help youth with their sex problems are most sentimental and unsatisfactory in their treatment of courtship. One would not quarrel with their advice, because they do point out the things that are desirable, but the difficulty is that they have no concrete help for working out the program they advocate. To test this general impression, I have just read with the greatest care the chapter on courtship in one of the books I regard as most helpful for sex counsel. In this particular chapter I cannot find a single concrete suggestion that would help me if I were practically concerned with problems of courtship. In the effort to enter into the spirit of courtship, there is apparently a temp-

BEFORE MARRIAGE

tation to become sentimental and preach rather than write simple, definite suggestions that have concrete meaning for young people.

In order to give the information that I feel young people want, this chapter will not be a general discussion of courtship, but will limit itself to courtship as it is related to sex. There are other aspects of courtship, and in *Wholesome Marriage* these are discussed with little attention to their sex aspect. Now I would reverse this and treat sex with only incidental reference to the other problems of courtship and engagement.

The young man or woman who has just entered courtship or expects soon to do so needs first of all to recognize that the experience to-day, even if it does not present new problems, makes former ones more perplexing and more difficult. This is due to the breaking down of some of our conventions, which in the past kept rather definite control of courtship for those who desired to maintain good social standing. This fading away of social control is largely because the time has come when young men

SEX IN MARRIAGE

and women feel equal to self-responsibility and therefore refuse to accept the restraint once laid on them. This change is not evidence of youth's recklessness or looseness of moral standards, but it is necessarily something that adds to the dangers of courtship, since it puts upon personal initiative and judgment responsibilities that in the past were escaped by merely following the general rule.

In plain English, the young man and woman today are largely free to do as they please in their courtship, but they must eventually accept the consequences of their choice. This is a period of self-responsibility, freedom, and frankness, but it is not true, as some seem to suppose, that courtship has lost part of its former purpose, and that there is no need of restraint, so that it does not matter so much as it used to what happens in the intimate fellowship of the young man and woman who see in each other a possible life partner.

It is of course about sex that the important happenings of courtship center. Before we consider in some detail the most important of these problems,

BEFORE MARRIAGE

it is necessary to recognize the double meaning of courtship, since both of its aspects have to do with sex. It is both an opportunity for the man and the woman to develop affection and the means by which each may test the character of the other.

Courtship is a period when two individuals, a male and a female, are drawn together. In this attraction, which, if it works out successfully, is to weld the two together for their earthly life, sex plays, and should play, a prominent part. In some countries this is not true, but marriage is either brought about by parents without consulting the will of the young people, or it is largely influenced by prudential and financial motives. Marriages under these circumstances also become successful, but this would not happen if the entire life of the young people were not different from ours. In our own case there cannot be a normal love courtship in which physical passion has no play.

It follows that there are two dangers which every sensible young man and woman need to realize. One, and this is a very common temptation in courtship,

SEX IN MARRIAGE

is to allow physical attraction to dominate completely, so that each is seeking in the other nothing more than physical satisfaction. Marriages that have at first nothing but a physical basis sometimes succeed, but without question such a marriage is extremely risky. Physical passion by itself without any common interest or companionship is apt to fade away, and rather quickly. This explains many divorces of persons who, being violently attracted by each other, marry on very short acquaintance, but within a year or two with intense bitterness seek separation. It is just not human to live day after day with a man or woman who has nothing to offer except sex.

On the other hand, no one would have the courage to underwrite the happiness of two persons who were fond of each other, but who throughout courtship felt no sex attraction. It is true that after marriage sex comradeship sometimes starts and vigorously develops, as it frequently does in countries where there is no romantic love between the young people whose marriages are arranged by the par-

BEFORE MARRIAGE

ents, but it is an extremely risky undertaking for any male and female to marry for motives that do not include a desire for physical contact. Recently two extremely passionate, cultured, and conscientious individuals have had to confess after several years of attempted adjustment that their marriage is a failure and divorce must be had. In this case the marriage was made an obligation by a dying relative, who thought the union desirable. Because this interference with their comradeship blocked the natural physical interest of each in the other and made both feel that marriage was a duty, sex fellowship became difficult, although each was conscious of strong passion.

The absence of sex from courtship is probably a more dangerous symptom than extreme passion, but the reader, especially the young woman, must accept the caution that it is easy to disguise sex interest and to suppose that it is not present when it really is. It is by no means true that passion always appears in clear form in courtship. The body of the normal young man and woman is so ready for sex

SEX IN MARRIAGE

awakening and so easily charged through and through with sex feeling, once attraction starts, that it is impossible for fellowship to go on, day after day, week after week, without sex energy arising to a new level. Normal as this is, it is for some a surprising and even at times a perplexing discovery.

This is illustrated by the following extreme incident. A young professional woman brought up in a very thoughtful home and given a college education, in the midst of a courtship about which she was beginning to be somewhat doubtful, went so far from her accustomed behavior one evening as to sit upon the lap of this man in whom she was interested. As a consequence of this she soon had, to her astonishment, sensations which she had not previously experienced. Because this happened, she supposed she was obligated to marry the man, and felt absolutely committed to an engagement which she would otherwise have broken. Finally, she married him, although she already knew she did not love him. As she now thoroughly understands, she was driven into her marriage by a false sense of obli-

BEFORE MARRIAGE

gation in utter ignorance of sex. Had she been acquainted with the fact that what happened to her was a perfectly natural thing under the circumstances and that its significance was merely that she had put herself where she had unusual sex stimulation, which in the future she could easily have avoided, her marriage would not have occurred.

Those who enter courtship with their eyes open understand the need of protecting themselves against the amount of sex stimulation which their association can very easily stir up. It is commonly supposed that this safeguarding is entirely the business of the man, but this is an error, based upon the old idea that it is only the man who finds self-control difficult and that the woman has a lesser endowment of sex. In actual experience it is nearly as often the woman as the man who is to blame for starting the development of sex that leads to strain and even regret. She may, however, make the association difficult merely because of her ignorance of the ways in which sex stimulation starts. It is only fair to realize that the woman is more likely than

SEX IN MARRIAGE

the man to suffer socially from giving way to passion, since she must run the risk of possible pregnancy. She, therefore, has prudential motives for keeping sex within bounds that make her at times appear indifferent to the urge of which the man has become so conscious. It is not a masculine obligation to protect courtship from becoming enslaved by physical passion; it is a mutual duty that falls upon both the lovers.

Unfortunately, on account of the differences of background, there is no absolute standard of conduct that can be insisted upon in courtship. The degree of expression of physical passion that will be shocking to one individual will be accepted as a matter of course by another and actually have less erotic stimulation for the second than the first. It is just such differences that make courtship difficult and place upon good judgment rather than rules the decision as to what is safe and good and what is dangerous.

Those who face the concrete problem of courtship adjustment must also remember that it is

BEFORE MARRIAGE

almost inevitable that the courtship as it proceeds should grow toward greater intimacy. The fellowship cannot remain where it starts if it is to be an advance toward matrimony. As intimacy increases along other lines it carries with it a more open betrayal of sex interest. It is better to understand this than to become, through ignorance, the victim of passion. It is on account of this increase of physical sex in normal courtship that society frowns upon long engagements. The constant association and postponement of marriage put upon the couple an increased sex tension constantly stimulated by their association, while at the same time there is denial of the legitimate fellowship that belongs to marriage. This accounts for the emotional disturbances that are so frequently associated with a long, intimate courtship.

Some who do not sense the fact that courtship must necessarily include an element of sex make the error of the young professional woman in thinking that just as soon as they become conscious that sex has been awakened by the association they are, be-

SEX IN MARRIAGE

cause of this appearance of physical passion, bound in honor to go on into marriage. This is most unwise, because if, for any reason whatever, doubt enters, it is the purpose of both courtship and the engagement to allow a retreat, before the social commitment has been carried to its culmination.

The mere feeling of sex attraction during the courtship offers no reason whatever for forcing oneself to marry if it has become clear that there has been a change in feeling on the part of either person or that the marriage is unwise. Stripped of sentiment, the situation merely is that through contact the young couple have acted upon one another in such a way as to bring to consciousness their sex desire. This, once it starts, can easily be transferred from the individual who originally stimulated its appearance to some one more qualified to give it permanent satisfaction in a marriage of mutual respect and affection. Sex awakening is no guarantee that two young people are especially adapted to give each other happiness. It is merely that, as members of opposite sexes, their being together in

BEFORE MARRIAGE

rather constant association has given nature its chance to bring to the surface impulses upon which it depends for the perpetuation of the race. Whether or not they ought to marry still remains a matter for calm judgment, not at all coerced by any feeling that they have become committed to each other because they are conscious that they have been sexually attracted.

The overconscientious reader who does not feel in any peculiar and new way what she imagines to be sex craving must not assume that a promising fellowship should be broken because it is destitute of necessary physical attraction. If one hungers for the presence of the other, loves to see his face and even most accidentally to touch his hand or feel the pressure of shoulder or arm as they walk along together, there is undoubtedly a physical attraction which, given favorable opportunity with increasing association and growing respect, will flame into consciousness and show itself genuine sex passion.

There is another thing about courtship that has to be recognized, besides the fact that the associa-

SEX IN MARRIAGE

tion leads to attraction. Courtship is also an experimenting with what, if it works out, will be a life fellowship. From this point of view courtship is a prelude to marriage and a period of discovery. It offers opportunity for the testing of the young man and woman now beginning to think seriously of marriage. Each seeks to be with the other, not only because this brings pleasure, but also on account of the opportunity it offers for getting better acquainted. In this process of becoming good friends there is another element than that ordinarily found in such comradeship. This additional feature is sex.

It is, of course, clearly not possible to become so well acquainted with a person's sex characteristics as with most of the other aspects of the personality, as an attempt to do this would rush the courtship into the complete intimacy of marriage and smother fellowship by the predominance of the physical. During this relationship preliminary to marriage there is something more important for the young people to discover than anything they can

BEFORE MARRIAGE

get from taking prematurely the final gift of marriage, and that is their fundamental sex attitude. Thus courtship is acid testing in bringing out the quality of the love that is assumed to include but also to master physical passion. Since courtship is a prelude to marriage, when the friendship advances to its ultimate matrimonial goal, it follows that whatever happened during courtship becomes a part of the memory of both the young man and young woman and ever afterward helps or hinders marriage happiness. In other words, there will not be after marriage any distinction whatever in the thinking of either man or woman between the revelations of character that were made before and after marriage, as one looks back to the earlier period of courtship. Here lies sex danger, because what may be accepted under the stress of passion by one or the other of the prospective partners may in the calmer aftermath receive the severest inner protest and be forever, even though hidden from expression, a source of deep-seated resentment.

No one can be familiar with the adjustment prob-

SEX IN MARRIAGE

lems of men and women in marriage without knowing the truth of this. Again and again what was accepted in courtship with feeble protest, when it is finally reckoned in the quieter days of marriage as the outcoming of selfishness or feeble affection, brings forth suspicion and bitter feeling. Since it is most often the man who is guilty of letting passion run away with the fellowship of courtship, it is upon him sooner or later that the blame is likely to fall, even when the unbiased observer acquainted with the facts of human sex behavior would regard the woman as the first cause of trouble, although she may have innocently exploded the dynamite that shattered his self-control.

It follows that it is good sense and in accord with the impulse of genuine affection for both the man and woman during courtship to ask from time to time, Just what effect will this particular conduct have upon us in our later union when in our calm moments we look back upon it? Only he or she destitute of genuine affection could ever be indifferent to the final consequences of whatever may have

BEFORE MARRIAGE

happened in courtship. Indeed this difference between those who are under the mastery of the present and those who have a longer look ahead is especially revealing of character, and often the discovery of unexpected weakness on the part of one who fails to meet the tests of courtship has led the other person to end the fellowship.

It would be wrong to suppose that these problems that bring out the inner life are exclusively related to sex, because this is by no means true. On the other hand, it is not strange that sex should frequently and without warning appear in some form or other to test character.

When a sex problem does arise it is nearly always far-reaching in its importance. Young people who seek assistance in making the best use of courtship have a right to ask for something more in the way of guidance than mere warning. It is necessary, therefore, that we consider the concrete sex problems of courtship in order to have a better understanding of their nature.

Courtship is bound to stimulate sex, even though

SEX IN MARRIAGE

the meaning of physical appeal may not be clear to the consciousness of the unsophisticated woman. It stands to reason that there cannot be courtship for any length of time without an awakening to greater vigor of the sex impulses always strong in the normal individual. Indeed a failure to bring about this peculiar interest in the other person is, as has already been said, sufficient reason for supposing that the courtship should come to an end. In so far as courtship in animal life foreshows love-making between humans, its purpose is clearly that of sex stimulation. The development of sex attraction is one of the purposes of courtship.

Discussions of courtship sometimes give the impression that love is a sort of magic that, independent of the characteristics of the individual, makes all men and women come under an outside force that has control over them. This, of course, sounds, when one stops to think, ridiculous. Being in love does not change any person. He loves as he is, revealing his inmost character as he is flooded with the strong emotion that we think of as romantic

BEFORE MARRIAGE

love. Men in love do not all act the same; women in love do not. There is, therefore, no standard pattern which can be drawn up as the only appropriate way of carrying on courtship.

On account of the social differences that still exist between men and women, and more especially on account of the early training each receives, which is even in these advanced days considerably different for boys than for girls, there is in many cases some distinction between the ways men and women feel in love. It is useful to recognize this, provided that it is not taken too seriously in the impression that there is a distinct rôle the man must play, and quite another that belongs to the woman.

With these differences between men and women that show rather frequently in courtship we are of course concerned only as they relate to the sex impulse. Perhaps the word that best describes a common reaction of men in courtship is idealizing. The man lifts the woman up onto a pinnacle. She stands apart from the common order. She is altogether desirable. There is no one else like her. And this is all

SEX IN MARRIAGE

true so far as it has to do with the meaning she has for him. Now, however, there must sooner or later enter into this idealizing the fact of sex. He not only knows that this woman like himself has sex impulse, but he also realizes that it is his desire that she should. At the same time, if sex in women previously has been associated with things coarse, if it has smacked in his experience of the purely animal attitude, then indeed there is discord in this idealizing process. Either he pushes out of consciousness so far as he can all evidence of her sex passion, if he comes to recognize its expression in any form whatsoever, or he finds himself thinking irresistibly of her sex appeal, although it seems to bring her down to common clay.

He, on the other hand, who has kept his respect for all women and has made sex a constituent of affection as he has thought previously about marriage and love, feels no conflict as he becomes conscious that sex is more and more entering into his intimacy with the woman whom he loves and expects to marry. It is what he expected to have hap-

BEFORE MARRIAGE

pen and he has no struggle to maintain his devotion since sex to him has never been so blighted as to make it seem debasing in any woman. It is possible for this second individual, without feeling any treason against love, to think clearly and frankly about sex and at the proper time talk it over with his beloved without feeling that the elevation of their fellowship has been brought down to things earthly.

In these differences between men we see coming to fruit such early conditions of childhood and experiences of youth as have already been discussed in former chapters. However, the man who finds the thought of sex bringing a foreign and debasing element into his love must resist the feeling that the courtship has been blighted, and instead recognize that his reaction is the unfortunate effect of earlier experience, making clear to himself that whatever his feeling may be, the fact is that sex is a legitimate and even necessary element in courtship, not only for the man but also for the woman.

There is no one attitude of women in courtship that is shared by all women. It is, however, true

SEX IN MARRIAGE

that women as a group, under the spell of love, have in common an experience that can be described so as to be helpful in the understanding of courtship if only it is not overemphasized. Many young women from about the time of puberty daydream a great deal regarding the kind of man they are to marry, their future home, and even the children they expect to have. In this frequent turning to fancy the girl comes to feel her need of complete commitment to some one whom she can love—in simple words, she longs for some one whom she can possess completely and to whom she will be everything he needs. Apparently she is more likely to dwell upon this personal relationship than upon anything that is clearly sexual, whereas the boy, in so far as his imagination turns toward the future, has definite thought of sex. In his daydreaming he thinks of sex more than he does of comradeship or parenthood, while the girl reverses the process and thinks of the man ordinarily with a faint sense of sex.

As the boy whose imagination or practices have led him to have a low idea of sex meets difficulty

BEFORE MARRIAGE

when the romance of love starts, so the girl with a different training has to meet the same basic problem as the boy, although not in the same way. As she turns her longing for man in general to the definite person with whom she starts courtship, she must sooner or later reckon with sex as it becomes conscious, due to the awakening of impulses that have been deeply implanted in her body. It may disturb her to find that she has sex needs, as well as a longing for the fusing of selves.

She usually finds herself struggling against the intrusion of sex and thinks of it as something quite beneath her affection. "Of course," she admits to herself, "it eventually has a proper place in marriage and represents a sort of sacrifice the woman has to make for the more animal-like man." The mischief such thinking can do in marring courtship one could hardly imagine. Here, for instance, is the illustration of a woman so shocked by the passionate kiss of the man to whom she was engaged that she expressed her disgust and threatened to break the engagement. Unfortunately for the happiness of

SEX IN MARRIAGE

the two she did not do this, but the man, amazed at her exaggerated reaction to what he had not even been conscious of, himself, never quite forgave her. When he discovered after marriage that she was much more passionate than he, he added to his resentment a feeling that she was not honest. Children were born and year after year the domestic life went on, but he never ceased to brood over the rebuke which cut him so deeply. He cared less and less for sex, as she cared more and more.

In time this home situation became a chief cause of a nervous breakdown which required his being placed in a sanitarium. The day he received his freedom he came a long distance to talk over with me his domestic problem. He had reached the philosophic stage, making a decision which, as time proved, saved him from a recurrent attack. "She has been," he said, "a miserable wife. She read into a natural and even accidental happening meaning that came out of her own wrong imagination. She spoiled our lives as husband and wife even before the day of our wedding. But if she has been a bad

BEFORE MARRIAGE

wife, she has been a good mother and I am going to keep my thought on that, and at my age the loss of sex fellowship does not mean what it would have in my earlier years."

The modern young girl who understands herself and is not afraid of her sex nature, who realizes that every normal woman has strong sex desire, is not at all frightened by the occurrence under the stimulus of intimate fellowship of an awakened sex nature. In her looking forward to marriage she has included in her thought of what the experience should bring an idea of sex union. She is ready, therefore, to deal frankly with sex whenever it appears, and expects before she marries to have a frank understanding with the man whom she loves. The trouble comes when the second type of girl is keeping company with the reticent man, or the frank man is associating with the first type of woman. Then there is such a difference in the interpretation of frankness and sincerity in dealing with sex that comradeship is endangered.

An engagement is simply a public recognition of

SEX IN MARRIAGE

the obligation that each of the two young people feels to the other. It is the announcement of the success of the courtship and a promise of marriage. Although it changes the social status of the young woman and the man, it does not end courtship. It is not a trial marriage, for marriage cannot be tested until it has actually come, bringing with it a finality of commitment. Sex still must be kept under control, but it should not occasion surprise that the sex impulses seem to gather strength, for that is natural enough as the thought of the wedding day becomes more and more definite. If sex takes possession of the comradeship, in addition to all the other dangers this involves, it adds a hazard that marriage may lose its fullness of meaning and come to seem primarily the legalizing of a relationship which sex dominated. Thus, instead of affection surmounting sex, love is overshadowed by impetuous physical craving.

Since the engagement is apt to bring this strain of an awakening sex desire under the promise of mutual affection, it must not be unduly prolonged. Of course there are interesting cases of very lengthy

BEFORE MARRIAGE

engagements that turned out happily. One of these was Huxley's waiting for his wife the years necessary to offer her economic security, but it is well to remember that they were especially favored in this long waiting by one being in Australia and the other in England.

In these days of freedom, women who are willing to allow any amount of intimacy and sex contact except the final climax of intercourse need to be told that they are guilty of most unjustly putting physical and nervous strain upon their lover who is stimulated almost to the breaking point, and then blocked from getting the relief his body craves, and that their policy is not only immoral, but that in addition it encourages them to get sex satisfaction without following the normal course. For this procedure they may have to pay heavily after marriage, when to their dismay they discover that through habit they have come to enjoy what are called the secondary forms of sex more than actual intercourse. If when this happens any woman credits herself with a greater refinement than the man,

SEX IN MARRIAGE

she merely adds self-deception to her unwholesome sex character. The fact is that, however she may interpret her experience to herself, she is mildly perverted and has lost the normal biological urge. There is a difference between the kiss of the engaged and the woman's learning to find through kissing a relief that should come only through an orgasm. It is because of the strain of engagement that youth of good judgment, eager to guard faithfully the welfare of each other, seek to bring the courtship soon to an end by entering marriage.

CHAPTER IV

THE SEX EQUIPMENT

FORTUNATELY men and women do not require for the art of love any detailed knowledge of the anatomy and physiology of sex. It is natural, however, for those who are about to marry to feel the need of some understanding of their sex equipment and its functioning, and perhaps even more to have a correct idea of the organs of the opposite sex.

The information they seek should be given them in definite and accurate form, even though it need not be presented in great detail. Men usually have a far better idea of their sex organs than women do of theirs. This is in part a result of the franker recognition of sex by men than by women. Strange as it may seem to men, there are women who until they marry know practically nothing of the structure of their organs of reproduction, having had no

SEX IN MARRIAGE

curiosity, or at least none they would admit to themselves, but merely an eagerness to keep from consciousness everything pertaining to their own sex. On account of the vague ideas young women about to marry may have regarding their own sex equipment, it is recommended that by means of a mirror they at least become familiar with that part of their sex equipment that can be seen from the outside.

When we speak of the sex equipment, we usually mean the sex organs. It is important, however, that we do not regard the physiology of sex in narrow terms, because the sex organs are intimately related to the body as a whole and especially to the nervous system. The reflex center that has control of sex activity is within the spinal cord. Sex sensation itself, even when localized, is actually reported to consciousness from the brain. The situation is just as it is with the eye. The sensation of sight is received through the pupil, passes over the optic nerve, and is turned into conscious experience in a definite part of the brain. Thus, the eye is the me-

THE SEX EQUIPMENT

dium of sight but does not itself bring forth the sensation of vision. So, although the sex organs furnish the means of sensation, the conscious sex experience is a product of the brain.

It is especially important that this relation of brain and sex organs be kept in mind, since it is rarely true that the organs themselves fail to function on account of structural difficulty. When trouble appears it is usually what we call psychic, that is, it is a difficulty created by experience and recorded in the higher nervous center of the brain.

In the later years of life there is frequently a reversal of this causal sequence, when changes taking place in the sex organs influence the higher centers and record themselves occasionally in changes of personality. This is particularly true in the case of woman at the menopause, commonly called the change of life. As her sex organs give up their reproductive activities, changes of various sorts appear in the body as a whole and are registered in nervous reactions. In extreme cases this leads to a temporary instability or even the final appearing of some men-

SEX IN MARRIAGE

tal disease which previously had been held in abeyance, and now in the upheaval comes to full expression.

The male organs. Man's sexual equipment is more thoroughly localized than the woman's. It is partly on the outside of the body and partly within. It carries on three functions: The emptying of the bladder through the penis, and sexual intercourse, which necessarily involves as a second activity man's contribution to the act of reproduction. The penis is made up of tissue that is spongy, permitting a considerable gathering of blood when there is sex excitement. When it is thus stimulated it becomes stiff and considerably larger. Unless this erection occurs it is impossible for the male to perform the sex act. When the penis is unaffected by sex excitement it hangs limp and has no more sensitiveness than most parts of the skin surface of the body. Its stimulation comes either from erotic thoughts, by which from the central nervous system itself the mechanism that leads to erection is started, or by friction at its most sensitive end, the glans, or, as is usually

THE SEX EQUIPMENT

true, by a combination of localized sensation and erotic thought.

The penis varies in size in different men, but is not necessarily in proportion to the size of the rest of the body. Its variation in size is usually not great and rarely is it of great significance for the matrimonial union. It is usually about an inch in diameter and from three to four inches in length. When filled with blood the penis becomes nearly twice as large. It also lifts itself so as to be at right angles from the body. The glans at the end is the sensitive part covered by mucous membrane having the color of the lips.

Extending through the penis is the urethra, through which the bladder empties itself, and which at the climax of intercourse permits the coming out of the spermatozoa which are thus deposited in the body of the woman as nature's way of fertilizing the ovum.

Beneath the penis hangs the sack of skin which is called the scrotum. Within this are suspended the testicles, which may be thought of as a laboratory

SEX IN MARRIAGE

for the preparation of human spermatozoa. The skin that covers the testicles is very thin, containing muscle fibers which cause it to contract when it is exposed to cold and to relax when the person is warm or fatigued.

The testicles are two firm ovoid glands about an inch and a half long and an inch wide. These also, of course, vary in size, but this difference has no importance for the art of love. The testicles are made up of an enormous quantity of small tubes whose business it is to produce the male germs that are required for fertilization. Ordinarily at the end of the high level of excitement during the sex act a fluid containing millions of these spermatozoa is discharged. When this discharge occurs almost immediately or very quickly after the sex act starts, it is called premature and leaves the woman stimulated but unsatisfied. It also lessens the pleasure of the experience for the man, and easily, if it happens frequently, takes away self-confidence.

Although ordinarily the scrotum is not sensitive during sex intercourse, it is richly endowed with

THE SEX EQUIPMENT

nerves and very sensitive to pressure or a sharp blow, which is extremely painful. When the testicles are removed by operation, decided changes appear in the body, especially if this is done before puberty, leading in that case to body structure that lacks the masculine characteristics. The vas deferens is the small canal through which the discharge of the testicles is conveyed to the urethra.

There are several glands that secrete the discharges that appear during the sex act or even before it actually starts. Of these Cowper's glands are the most important. They secrete a clear sticky substance which by some is mistaken for the seminal fluid in which the spermatozoa float. This semen which comes with the discharge at the man's climax is distinguishable by a peculiar smell. This odor comes from the contribution of the prostate gland. This is a gland said to be about the size of a large chestnut, and which frequently makes trouble for older men by enlarging and blocking the urethra, thus preventing the proper emptying of the bladder.

When, as in the case of the continent young man,

SEX IN MARRIAGE

there is an accumulation of semen, it is discharged during sleep by what are called nocturnal emissions. The vigorous young man in good health will, perhaps, have about two a week, but at times it may be oftener or less often. Erotic thinking, whether caused by daydreaming or by stimulating situations, increases the frequency of this overflowing, when discharge by normal intercourse is not possible. These emissions are not as some still think a sign of weakness, but a perfectly normal method the body has of getting rid of material for which it has no immediate need. It is possible for this natural process to become excessive. When this is true and health suffers, treatment should be sought from a reputable physician. In no case should there be recourse to drugs without a doctor's advice.

The germ cells, or spermatozoa, that float in the seminal fluid are very small with a long tail. This tail is the motive power that enables them to swim against the current as they pass up the woman's uterus and into the tubes. They have been found alive in the tubes and uterus three and a half weeks

THE SEX EQUIPMENT

after coitus. Lack of knowledge of their vitality explains some undesired pregnancies when sex play continues after the discharge, it being not understood that for some time the germs clinging to the penis or within it are vital and can pass into the vagina and thus fertilize the woman.

The female organs. As compared with that of the man, the sexual equipment of a woman is more complicated, is mostly within her body, and is more widely diffused. Between her thighs she has the vulva, two parallel folds of skin called the large lips. After puberty these are covered with pubic hair. If these two folds of skin be pressed apart, within are found two lesser folds of mucous membrane which are known as the lesser lips. These contain glands from which during sex excitement fluid pours forth which, acting as a lubricant, makes it easier for intercourse to take place.

Within the vulva at its upper end is a small bulb, the clitoris, made up of tissue similar to that of the penis. Its function is to swell slightly when the woman is sexually excited. Although resembling the

SEX IN MARRIAGE

gland at the end of the penis, it is small in size, not larger ordinarily than the point of one's little finger.

Below the clitoris is the urethra, which is the opening into the bladder. Ordinarily this does not have any sex significance, but its functioning is frequently misinterpreted by young women who think either that it is used in sex intercourse or that the vagina is used as a canal for the bladder.

Below the urethra is the vagina which as its name suggests is a membranous tube into which the penis enters. Closed at one end, it measures from three to five inches in length. Ordinarily in a state of relaxation it is collapsed and tightly closed. It is capable, however, of being very greatly expanded, being composed of muscles in folds which permit the necessary stretching in the case of childbirth when the child passes from the uterus through the vagina out into life. Intercourse takes place by the passing in and out of the penis in this vagina.

At the entrance of the vagina is found a thin membrane, the hymen, which partly or fully covers the entrance. This used to be thought of as a means

THE SEX EQUIPMENT

of testing the virginity of the woman, but as we shall see in a later chapter it is now recognized that this is not reliable. It seldom so thoroughly covers the opening as to make it impossible for the menstrual flow to pass out. When it does interfere with the monthly period it has to be perforated. With intercourse also it has to be pushed aside, or, when unusually thick, slit by a physician, in order that there may be access.

The uterus is a pear-shaped muscular organ about three inches long and two inches broad at its upper end attached to the pelvic region by strong ligaments. Since the child grows within the uterus, it has to be prepared for rapid and great expansion. Its walls are thick and this muscular tissue stretches as is necessary with the increasing size of the growing child. In proper position it lies at right angles with the vagina into which it opens. Its mouth, the cervix, goes down within the vagina forming a slight groove near the end of the vagina. The uterus often gets out of position, especially when there has not been good muscular development in preparation for

SEX IN MARRIAGE

childbirth. If it is shifted either backward or forward or extends too far within the vagina fertilization becomes more difficult, since the channel may be partly closed by its wrong position. Sometimes in order to secure fertility it has to be brought back by medical treatment or operation to its normal place. It ordinarily has no important part in sex activity, but responds to general stimulation by moving slightly down into the vagina and producing a faint suction. Apparently some women during intercourse greatly enjoy contact with this lower part of the uterus at the point where it enters the vagina.

On the left and right sides of the uterus in the upper end are the Fallopian tubes, which convey the ovum from the ovaries into the uterus. These tubes are small and easily blocked by inflammation, so that when gonorrhea, for instance, enters them by its upward spread of contagion, sterility may temporarily or permanently result. Beside the Fallopian tubes are the ovaries, which in function and character suggest the testicles of the man. These are important for reproduction, sex, and structure, be-

THE SEX EQUIPMENT

cause when they are removed not only is pregnancy made impossible, but there are changes also in the general body structure and function, including usually indifference to sex intercourse.

CHAPTER V

THE BEGINNINGS OF MARRIAGE

MUCH has been written to impress those about to be married with the importance of the first intercourse. The influence this experience may have upon subsequent married life justifies the attention it has received. In their zeal to help the reader, however, some writers run the risk of creating overanxiety in the mind of the conscientious person about to enter matrimony.

The first intercourse is important, but largely because the newly married are so ignorant about sex and so unwilling to meet their first physical experiences together with frank intelligence. It is not at all true that the first intercourse must be perfectly successful in its technique or a shadow is cast forever over the relationship. The facts are just the opposite. In the long run, affection may be much

THE BEGINNINGS OF MARRIAGE

stronger in the life of the woman who realizes through imperfect intercourse at the beginning of marriage how patient and kindly and unselfish her husband was. The very earnestness with which young men and women prepare themselves for the ordeal of the consummation of marriage is in itself an obstacle by creating undue anxiety and unnecessary nervousness when the test comes.

When writers attempt to impress their readers with the great significance of the first intercourse, they are not trying to make it seem that the destiny of matrimony is to be decided by the degree of success that the couple have in their first coitus. It is rather that apparent brutality, possibly due to awkwardness, nervousness, and ignorance on the part of the husband, may be forever resented by the wife, or that the actual selfishness of the man may so clearly come to the surface that the wife will never forget it. On the other hand, the woman's hesitancy to abandon herself to the sex embrace or her fictitious modesty, assumed because she supposes this is expected of her, may at a later time, when the hus-

SEX IN MARRIAGE

band finds that she is as human as himself in her desire for intercourse, lead him to doubt her honesty or even the strength of her affection. Where there is frank understanding that the first intercourse is somewhat experimental and may or may not be completely satisfactory, the experience starts propitiously, for it is no longer a testing but an adventure together which is sure in the end to work out with success.

Neither the man nor the woman should look forward to their first intercourse with dread, the result of an exaggerated idea of its actual importance. Although there need not be the anxiety that in its extreme resembles panic, both the man and the woman wish to do everything that can be done in sensible preparation to make the first experience physically as satisfying as possible. It is well, therefore, to have a definite goal that is aimed at. One is not attempting to reach a standard of intercourse technique which must be learned by all who marry, lest the experience lose its value. The sex needs of all are not the same. Individuality enters here rather

THE BEGINNINGS OF MARRIAGE

more than it does even in diet, and any of us that have had the experience know how irksome eating by formula becomes, if no recognition is made of the peculiar tastes and food habits of the individual.

The bride and groom are not starting after a definite goal in physical efficiency which has become the standard for all happy couples. They are exploring their own sex resources and learning in affectionate fellowship to work out for themselves a happy adjustment. This word adjustment carries, perhaps, the thought that most needs to be in the minds of the newly married. Coitus is not an adaptation by either the husband or the wife to the demands of the other member of the sex partnership. The relationship must be reciprocal. There must be mutual adaptation, and it is just this that makes the experience a process of adjustment.

If the sex life starts happily it begins in such a way that the growth of satisfaction can proceed along with a greater depth of affection. The first intercourse can be outstanding and represent perhaps the most thrilling sex experience in the life of

SEX IN MARRIAGE

the individuals. But it is seldom the most profound in its pleasurableness, and when it is, matrimony proceeds toward an anticlimax rather than making the normal growth that should come with the years. In no aspect of life is it more true that everything is good in its season, than in regard to wholesome sex experience. It is, therefore, useless to anticipate the mutual understanding of each other's needs that marriage fellowship finally brings. It is equally pathetic when the married couple look backward and feel that their greatest achievement in sex adjustment took place on their wedding night.

Sex life is exactly like the other parts of the living together of the young husband and wife. All along the line there has to be compromise and mutual adjustment as each brings his or her habits to the mutual undertaking of a life fellowship. Sex is not something apart, a peculiar skill which both the husband and wife must be ready to assume immediately after marriage. It represents a process of adaptation by each to the needs of the other. It is an adjustment and should proceed with increasing suc-

THE BEGINNINGS OF MARRIAGE

cess. The first intercourse must provide the right start, which means that whatever its proportion of physical success it must prove to be a genuine effort on the part of both to share an intimacy which, once they become skillful in the use of their resources, will bring them increasing pleasure and a fund of common interest.

A word of caution must be spoken lest some readers by their wrong thinking wreck forever their matrimonial venture. It is not at all true that the first intercourse always reveals awkwardness and nervousness and a degree of fear. In other words, there may be from the beginning highly successful coitus, and this must not lead either individual to suspect that the other has been already initiated.

At the very beginning some fortunate couples will start their life together with decided success. Intercourse being what it is, it would be strange if this never happened. There is so much connected with coitus that is reflex, built into the body by inheritance, that there are doubtless many—how many we do not know because at present concerning such

SEX IN MARRIAGE

matters there are not any safe statistics—who without any previous instruction or preliminary intercourse have a large measure of satisfaction from their very first intimacy. Probably a part of this group, representing the peasant type, never travel very far in the art of love, so that although their beginning is happy their sex career in the long run remains meager.

It would seem unnecessary in view of all that has been said and written regarding it in recent years to insist that the absence of the hymen in the woman does not mean that she has not been a virgin. The facts, however, justify the repetition of this assertion. Some girls are born with practically no hymen; some lose their hymen by medical treatment in early childhood (while others suffer local inflammation unrelieved because their parents fear lest the stretching or cutting of the little girl's hymen by the physician shall later be misinterpreted); other hymens are destroyed by much washing or by the active life of the modern girl.

Whatever purpose this apparent vestige of earlier

THE BEGINNINGS OF MARRIAGE

body structure had at one time, it is entirely useless now. The hymen's presence is utterly without value. We can assume that once it had a purpose, but what that was science does not know.

Though the presence or absence of the hymen has no actual importance as proof or disproof of the wife's virginity, wrong thinking in regard to it on the part of either husband or wife may be of great importance, perhaps becoming the first snag the matrimonial ship encounters. If the woman thinks that her hymen is likely to excite suspicion, she is likely to have anxious moments that are a bad preparation for her marriage. If she senses the fact that the condition of her hymen, which she knows has no significance at all as evidence of her earlier sex conduct, is exciting suspicion in her husband, her resentment is likely to be terrific. Although the absence or presence of the hymen should not have any significance for the newly married, it frequently is the first cause of the coming to the surface of traits of character that in the end are sure to prevent a successful marriage.

SEX IN MARRIAGE

In the majority of cases the hymen has to be broken at the time of first intercourse. In a large proportion of instances this leads to some hurting of the woman and some bleeding. This is rather generally known and many women greatly exaggerate the ordeal they face and by their nervousness complicate the first coitus. For this reason it would probably be good sense if the hymen were always cut before marriage by the simple surgical operation that is required. This is not as yet the general practice, but in the future it probably will be.

The danger is that the woman's reaction against the husband's tearing the hymen may become fixed in her thought with the sex act itself so that it does not for a long time have the pleasure that it should, or even, in extreme cases, never becomes pleasurable. In many cases, possibly the majority of cases, the injury felt is very slight, and the bleeding also, so that the woman hardly realizes what has happened in the greater sensation of pleasurable sex contact. If the information I have received is representative of modern women as a group, this is

THE BEGINNINGS OF MARRIAGE

the most common result of the incidental breaking or pushing aside of the hymen at the first intercourse.

If, after the hymen is broken by the first intercourse, the woman has considerable inflammation which gives her pain, there should not be a second intercourse until the torn surfaces are healed. To further this, it is of advantage to use douches and the application of some simple salve, such as vaseline. Usually within a day or two the smarting ceases.

The two most common blunders at the beginning of marriage represent, as one would expect, contrasting extremes. The first is the cave man tactics concerning which much has been written. The man who thinks enough of a woman to marry her makes a poor choice when for the sake of a temporary physical satisfaction he surrenders for all time her loyalty and respect. Yet this still happens in countless cases almost immediately after the wedding, when the man, under the control of physical passion, takes possession of the woman's body as if it

SEX IN MARRIAGE

were an object to which by the marriage ceremony he had obtained a right.

To the normal woman nothing could be more disastrous than this exhibition by the husband of an utter disregard for his wife's feelings. She will rightly come to feel that he has married her merely for her body, and as a consequence she will never yield it to him with the abandon that he craves.

The husband is not always as selfish as he seems. It is at times his ignorance and awkwardness, a misinterpretation of the part he has to perform, which leads him to seem to be so indifferent to his wife's feelings. A good guide for him is to fall back into the spirit of courtship and start love play with his wife as if she were still in the status of their comradeship before marriage. It is usually not so much the strength of his passion that shocks her as her lack of readiness for it. This comes about from his giving her too little time for the preparation she needs in the interlude before intercourse. In other words, the stimulus that acts so quickly and directly upon him needs to have time to stir up the more

THE BEGINNINGS OF MARRIAGE

elaborate sex equipment that belongs to the wife. In this pre-coitus love-making the wife will usually follow the cue of his leadership and gradually become more and more eager for the consummation of marriage.

In this procedure it would be a decided mistake for the husband to think that his preparation is exclusively of a physical sort. There is such a thing as stirring the body passions of a woman against her own desire. In a recent case a man who was not only skillful and strong in sex appeal but who had also been given counsel by one of the best of the physicians specializing in problems of sex, in spite of all these advantages, due to his selfishness and his unwillingness to recognize the psychic needs of his wife, found his marriage becoming less and less happy until it ended in her divorcing him on the charge of cruelty.

It is by making the first coitus not only agreeable, but the natural expression of affectionate contact, that it becomes the basis of a successful marriage. Affection and sex have to be fused by bringing the

SEX IN MARRIAGE

spirit of love directly into the sex act itself. When this happens there is no risk of selfish impetuosity, since when passion rises to high levels both man and woman have reached intensity through preliminary stimulation.

It behooves the man under ordinary circumstances to start showing his affection by the kisses and body contact that the woman welcomed during the engagement. Little by little this love play should be carried to greater intimacy, care being taken not to make the woman feel that she is being hurried along or pushed into more intimacy than she desires. After a half hour or an hour of loving, the woman is usually as eager for coitus as any man could be.

There are times when, due to the nervous fatigue of the wedding and travel attending the honeymoon, the young woman is too tired to respond to any long caressing. This is not at all because of any lack of sex, but merely because, as will always be true throughout her married life, when her energy sinks too low she must have sleep and rest and cannot further expend her vitality in coitus. As soon as the

THE BEGINNINGS OF MARRIAGE

man discovers this either by her reaction or, better, in the case of a perfectly frank woman, by what she says, he will leave her alone and do his utmost to provide for her the necessary rest. He will find generally with the coming of the morning that the expression of affection which she would have reacted against unfavorably the night before because of fatigue is now thoroughly welcome and met with responses. He will ever be grateful that he had the opportunity to show himself master of the situation, ready to bide in patience a favorable time for their first venture in physical union.

Even if the woman is a good sport and tries to put aside her reluctance to enter upon sex stimulation and not disappoint her husband, if he can detect that her mood is one of fatigue, he may well ask her to postpone until she has become rested their consummation of marriage. Such a situation as this has no difficulty for those who are absolutely frank and are willing to express their true feelings about sex as about any other common interest.

In contrast to the husband who rushes into inter-

SEX IN MARRIAGE

course is the one who postpones for one or several motives the first coitus. Although this is not so common a mistake as that of the impetuous husband, it at least happens frequently enough to receive warning from all who are familiar with the difficulties of early marriage. Doubtless this policy on the part of the husband is in many instances favorably received and deeply appreciated by wives who feel too tired out or too nervous after the wedding ceremony to go through an ordeal which they fear. Such wives do not bring their reaction to the family counsellor. On the other hand, there are women who date their first feeling of hostility to the husband from the wedding night when, in spite of their expectations and readiness to enter intercourse, nothing happened.

It is interesting to search out the various motives that operate to lead husbands to this apparent unconcern. Interpreted by the wives as a lack of interest or weakness of sex impulse, it is usually the result of an entirely different motive. As has been said, it is at times merely the desire to protect the

THE BEGINNINGS OF MARRIAGE

woman from what the husband has been led to think she fears, based upon the belief that she is too tired to enter upon an irksome or even painful experience. Instead of saying this the husband keeps quiet, with the consequence that his motive is all too often misunderstood. There are other times when the explanation is not in the husband's thought of his wife, but in his thought of himself. He is the victim of fear and postpones meeting a test he dreads. The fear that gathers behind this refusal to face the situation commonly takes one of three forms.

In one, the trouble is that the husband has heard so much about the risk of forcing himself upon his wife that he feels he should await her invitation. When she supposes that the initiative should come from her husband she naturally gives him no cue, and the more embarrassed he gets, the less easy it is for him to break through and assume the leadership she expects. It is evident that at the bottom of such a situation is lack of frank understanding, and that the courtship has failed to provide the comradeship

SEX IN MARRIAGE

that should save from so unfortunate a beginning of marriage.

In the case of P., the husband, from what he thought a highly conscientious desire to save his wife from attentions which he took it for granted she would not at that time wish to receive, evidenced no sex interest whatsoever on their wedding night, and intercourse did not take place until two or three days had passed. After about two years of apparently uneventful married life, this wife announced to the great astonishment of her husband, on returning from a trip to a neighboring city, that she had there met a man with whom she was going to live, with or without a divorce, and that she had merely returned home in fairness to tell him of her determination. It was not an easy task to save this particular household from what at first seemed inevitable divorce. But eventually it was discovered how unsatisfactorily the man had been meeting the sex needs of his wife, while he all the time thought himself unselfish in not demanding of her as much sex satisfaction as he actually craved. Their trouble

THE BEGINNINGS OF MARRIAGE

was largely sex maladjustment, although financial differences contributed to the problem. The sex element was distinctly the result of misinterpretation and lack of frank understanding.

Another fear that influences husbands is the thought of failure. They have gathered the idea that only the sophisticated can go through the first coitus without revealing great awkwardness. Often there has been for several weeks before the wedding a great deal of brooding, until in the end the man is literally in a state of panic. This is the explanation of many of those strange cases of which one occasionally hears, in which the bridegroom almost at the moment of the wedding either runs away or fails to appear to go on with the ceremony. It is not by any means loss of desire for the woman that leads to this precipitate retreat; it is probably most often lack of self-confidence. We are all familiar with the fact that in preparation for athletic contests there is such a thing as going stale. This condition can come about whenever there is an unreasonable concentration upon an approaching task. In college cir-

SEX IN MARRIAGE

cles it is frequently seen in the examinations of those coming up for higher degrees who find themselves mentally less alert than usual and sometimes even have a sort of mental panic because of nervousness they have gotten into from too much preparation for their testing.

To those happily married it seems almost impossible that any one should so lose self-control by merely thinking about the first sex intercourse, but to the inexperienced the ordeal may seem overwhelming in importance, and there may be a sense of inadequacy which at least in part is a product of ignorance in matters pertaining to sex.

In certain individuals this fear of failure takes a very definite shape. We suspect that in some of these cases there has been an earlier experience that has led to the idea. At any rate, these men when they draw near to the wedding night worry about their not being vigorous enough to perform the sex act. They dread lest they should prove to be impotent, and, as a consequence of their fear and the accompanying nervousness, in some instances at

THE BEGINNINGS OF MARRIAGE

least, suffer from the very thing of which they were afraid. Fear and nervousness in the woman may tighten the vagina and make intercourse difficult, but these conditions in the man may not only lead to difficulties, they may make the act impossible. Women of experience realize that under nervous strain the man may for the moment or even longer be impotent, but the newly married wife may not have this information and the man may dread a failure which he takes it for granted she will not sympathize with or understand. Probably he would not meet any trouble at all if he were not the victim of his own imagination.

Occasionally the predicament in which the man finds himself is suggested by something that happened when at an earlier time he visited a prostitute. If this is true it is well for him to notice how different his married situation is from the previous experience. Formerly his desire was divided by an inner protest against an act which in his heart of hearts he could not approve. Added to this was fear of venereal infection. In the midst of such conflict

SEX IN MARRIAGE

there was little opportunity for the nervous system to manage the mechanism involved in carrying out the sex act. As he looks forward to the wedding night he runs no danger of emotional conflict because of impulses pushing him in opposite directions; his risk is mainly that of suggestion from the earlier experience. By recognizing this and then putting his thoughts not upon the sex act itself but on the affection he feels for the woman he is about to marry, and when he is with her alone by immediately expressing this feeling of love in caresses and body contacts, he will find the idea of impotency passing out of consciousness and in most cases he will have no difficulty.

Wives trained under the former conventions of sex taboo sometimes complicate exceedingly the rôle the man has to play at the time of first intercourse. Unable to see things squarely in their own thinking, they find it impossible to be frank and thereby help their husbands when the two are first left to each other in the privacy of the wedding night.

There are fortunately several motives that impel

THE BEGINNINGS OF MARRIAGE

the woman toward the first intercourse. Having had no experience whatever on which to build the idea of sex stimulus, she may not have any well defined desire for coitus as a physical experience. On the other hand, she does have genuine affection and knows, if she be not utterly ignorant, that it is in her power to bring pleasure to her husband which he expects and greatly wants. Allied with this is the natural curiosity which makes her want to know just what is involved in the sex act about which she has heard so much. She also wishes fully to commit herself and to be through with what she may perhaps dread. Out of these mixed motives comes a considerable impulse toward coitus, even if she feels no drive of physical passion. Sex, therefore, is not without its allies, but the experience is all too often difficult for both the husband and the wife merely because they are not equal to the necessary frankness.

When one thinks of the deception that had to be practiced even in her own thinking under the taboo that formerly operated so strongly as to deny the

SEX IN MARRIAGE

woman's legitimate sex needs, it seems a miracle that there was not much greater incompatibility of sex than there appears to have been. In these days there is little excuse for any woman's entering matrimony with the idea that she must hide her sex craving and yield herself with expressions of protest which can only puzzle and hamper, even if they do not deceive, the husband who is anxious not to do anything to hurt his newly married wife.

There comes out of the custom of the past a bad way of starting marriage. No modern-minded young people should follow it. Among our parents and grandparents it was very common for the first intercourse to take place in darkness. This permitted the wife's keeping her modesty. There are a great many reasons why coitus should not take place in darkness. If a bad start is made, it is not always easy to turn to the better way. Of course, it would be bad counsel to advise the husband always to insist upon this wiser program, but he should at least try not to have the lights turned out, as many women will suggest, when the two are approaching their first

THE BEGINNINGS OF MARRIAGE

sex contact together. If there is anything that justifies being made an experience of the light it is sex intercourse.

It is good policy on the honeymoon not to take too seriously the opportunities for sight-seeing, but instead to make introduction to sex the important purpose of the trip. For this reason husband and wife should not start the day early if considerable sleep has been lost the preceding night in sex fellowship. It is well also not to have a long travel schedule, so exacting in its demands that no allowance can be made for loss of sleep. The American honeymooner, unless very experienced, is usually hampered by too much zeal in sight-seeing. It were better to cut the honeymoon so that concentration on the beginnings of sex intimacy can be had, saving for some future time a longer trip for sight-seeing. It is always unfortunate when the wedding has to be followed by a night in the sleeper. For most people, unless they travel constantly, a good night's rest is impossible on the train. For those newly married, to this difficulty of sleeping on the

SEX IN MARRIAGE

train is added the necessity of being close together without much privacy. A short trip to a neighboring city where there is a good hotel offers far better conditions for a satisfactory honeymoon than a long journey on the train. Boat travel, aside from the risk of seasickness, is much to be preferred to several nights in the sleeper. Even the compartment of the sleeper, although it is far preferable to the ordinary berth or section, does not give the freedom and privacy of a stateroom on a steamer.

The danger of spoiling the honeymoon by worry over money has been discussed in the authors' *Wholesome Marriage*, but it is well to remember that anything that causes anxiety interferes with the sex pleasure of the honeymoon trip. It is not good to allow what is customary among the newly married of one's place or set to interfere with the planning of the honeymoon in accordance with one's own desires. If there is any time when two young people should be independent in working out their own plans, it surely is at this time when they launch their marriage venture.

CHAPTER VI

THE LOVE ART OF THE HUSBAND

THE American husband has been criticized by specialists acquainted with America's problems of marriage as a poor lover. If this be true of men it is doubtless just as true of women. Neither the average young man nor woman gives much thought to what may rightly be called the art of love. They cannot justly be said to be indifferent; it is merely that if they think at all of their approaching sex union they either concentrate upon the problems that they have heard are the most serious, or they innocently think that nature takes care of itself and there is no reason for special attention to the ways of intercourse. Even when there is a determined effort to find out how best to carry on marital experience, it is not always easy to get the necessary information.

Nothing could be more disastrous than for the

SEX IN MARRIAGE

man to seek enlightenment from a prostitute, for there is nothing of less concern to her than the kind of personal sex relationship and adjustment that is necessary for satisfactory married life. She seeks only to get her cue from the man and to respond to his wishes. Even if the act is thoroughly disgusting, she must assume apparent passion, and her skill lies in catering to the man or in deceiving him. Obviously she cannot be a good instructor. As a consequence, the man must seek his information either from the printed page or in the counsel of some friend or specialist.

It helps the husband to keep in mind that his love life should be an art. His skill must come both from practice and from observing how best he satisfies his wife and himself. This does not mean that he must look forward to the learning of a definite technique as precise as that of golf or tennis. There may be for the tennis player the perfect stroke which each player attempts to achieve, there may be for the golf player just one right way to hold his club when he has a certain distance to make. Love

THE LOVE ART OF THE HUSBAND

expressed in sexual union cannot become thus stereotyped. It is more like the art of dancing or that of music. Exact repetition is difficult, the atmosphere changes, conditions vary, there are subtle differences from time to time, differences of mood, differences of desire, differences in the degree of passion. The great musician does not endlessly play over and over the same composition. His preferences change. He is a great artist because he makes what his skill produces accord with his inner feeling. Thus it is with the true lover, only his task is double. He must harmonize with the fleeting moment of feeling of his wife as well as of himself. Thus he adjusts both to outward conditions and those within. If he is betrayed by his own feelings into catering only to himself, then his chance of artistic love making completely passes and he must accept a meager pleasure, a one-sided satisfaction.

There is a sense in which it is true that in this generation large classes of women are for the first time achieving self-expression in sex experience. They have escaped from the convention which made

SEX IN MARRIAGE

it their duty to render pleasure to their husbands, without expecting much regard to be paid to their own needs.

It is, of course, easy to exaggerate this change of attitude on the part of women, because wise men have always found that their own satisfaction could not rise high if they remained indifferent to their wives' feelings. In practice the theory of woman's subordination in sex has probably been less widely observed than the preachments of the period would suggest.

Possibly there is now risk of overstressing the responsibility of the man and forgetting that the woman's part is not a passive one. She also has the privilege of contributing to the love making, for the art cannot be worked out successfully by either husband or wife alone. Woman's part is so important in coitus that it must be treated in some detail by itself. For the man, however, the first step toward a skilled love art is to realize that here as elsewhere in life the best values do not come to those who put themselves first. This, perhaps, is the most common

THE LOVE ART OF THE HUSBAND

fault of American husbands, the chief basis for the criticism of their immature love art.

It is folly to suggest or to encourage coitus when conditions are unfavorable. Hardly any program could be more absurd and in the end likely to break down matrimonial happiness than to have a stated time, week after week, month after month, for coitus.

To follow the calendar in the marital life is to reveal at the outset such a mechanical thought of intercourse that any genuine love art becomes impossible. Doubtless in the majority of marriages a sort of rhythm of frequency of intercourse gradually develops. This must never be so domineering as to approach the regularity of three straight meals a day. It is a beauty of the art of love that it cannot be standardized or made mechanical; it must remain flexible and sensitive to varying conditions, or it loses its flavor.

Favorable conditions for coitus require thought of both mental and physical conditions. *Tristram Shandy* begins with the wife's asking her husband

SEX IN MARRIAGE

at an inappropriate time whether he has forgotten to wind the clock. Tristram Shandy dates his conception and misfortune from this occurrence, since her interruption occurred at a disastrous time for the love making of the husband and wife. There is more in this incident than merely the wit of Laurence Sterne. It is indeed unfortunate for any child to be conceived into a family where intercourse means so little to either husband or wife as to permit its being broken in upon by questions of household routine or family management. If either husband or wife or both of them are under the control of worry or even have their minds upon something else that forbids the abandonment necessary for successful coitus, the intercourse should be postponed.

This is, of course, particularly true when, because of different points of view, they are contending or possibly quarreling about some decision which finally must be made. It is an atrocious situation that one sometimes finds when husband and wife after a violent conflict turn to coitus, a little later renewing

THE LOVE ART OF THE HUSBAND

their contention. When fellowship runs deeply, perhaps after a quiet self-revealing talk alongside of the smoldering wood of the fireplace, mutual thoughts of coitus may lead to an experience extraordinary in its richness—a pleasant memory for all time.

It might seem unnecessary to remind the husband that he must pay due regard to physical conditions; for example, strict cleanliness must be observed, not merely for important sanitary reasons, but because of its aesthetic value. I have never ceased to protest against a wedding I once witnessed at a minister's home in Northern New Hampshire. The wife appeared first, timid but dressed for the occasion, in good taste, and with great neatness; then came the man who was to marry her, right from the field in his overalls without even washing his hands. Had I been the clergyman I am sure that I would never have had the heart to pronounce that indifferent, animal-like man and almost terror-stricken woman husband and wife. The experience left with me one of the most pathetic memories I have ever had.

Of course, such an occurrence is rare indeed, but

SEX IN MARRIAGE

the wise husband will show special attention to his physical appearance at times when he looks forward to coitus. He should surely be as particular as he was during courtship.

There is one thing especially of which he needs to think, which might at first seem trivial but which is certainly not so. He should take good care that he is free from mouth odors. Occasionally we meet a person so afflicted or so indifferent that this offensive odor is almost unendurable during ordinary conversation. What must be the repulsion of the woman who has to endure this while in the most intimate association possible? What the careful man needs to know is that for some people there is a tendency during intercourse to develop an acid mouth. To avoid trouble from this there should be a liberal use of milk of magnesia or some other alkaloid mouth wash before beginning coitus.

It is most unwise to enter upon coitus when very tired or when one's spouse is thoroughly fatigued. The only justification for doing this is when from experience it has been discovered that coitus quick-

THE LOVE ART OF THE HUSBAND

ens sleep and makes it possible for the overfatigued individual to escape staying awake. The sufferer from headache or a nose cold or any other infection should abstain from coitus, because the body is in no condition for the expending of the energy intercourse requires.

If, as will often happen, the man finds himself covered with perspiration at the end of intercourse, he should take great care for a few moments not to expose himself so as to become chilled.

Privacy is of course desired for coitus, and any thought on the part of husband or wife that it may not be maintained adds tension and dissatisfaction to the experience. City people in apartments, or any who fear that their intimacy within their own home may be heard by others, find complete abandonment in coitus difficult. In building one's own house it will prove a good investment to have sound-proof walls so that there may never be any dread of being overheard. Without question one of the reasons why the modern American woman tends to suppress her emotional reactions to coitus in laughter, cries, and

SEX IN MARRIAGE

other sounds, is that she keeps the fear of being overheard so constantly in mind that she dare not be natural. Indeed, it is no uncommon practice for love-making that has been spontaneous in its laughter and expressions of endearment to sink into absolute silence just as soon as coitus starts. Such constraint is no advantage to wholesome sex intercourse, and occasionally the wife who is quiet merely out of prudence seems to the husband to lack vitality. Perhaps such inhibition does lessen sex feeling.

So much has been said about the need of the husband's assuming responsibility for mutual adjustment in the sex act, that the male reader may properly now ask that this be made specific by a more detailed discussion. Suppose for clearness' sake we think of the adjustment as involving thought and feeling as well as body adjustment. If we could tap the thought of many young husbands and wives, we would find that their ideas regarding coitus are as far apart as the East from the West, and when these differences lead to incompatibility or hamper

THE LOVE ART OF THE HUSBAND

sex enjoyment they necessarily become a menace to married happiness.

Here is an illustration of divergent thoughts that need to be brought into discussion and compromised. The husband, being strongly sexed, looks forward during courtship to a great deal of sex enjoyment after marriage. He has previously protected himself from temptation by thinking of the opportunity his marriage will bring him for a satisfying sex life. He desires and expects that his wife will consent to very frequent coitus. She, on the other hand, has been taught by some one who has influenced her considerably that she must as far as possible maintain in marriage the spirit of courtship, and that she should not frequently give her body to her husband, lest by too much familiarity and indulgence he grow unappreciative and eventually tired of his wife's charms. In her thought, therefore, coitus is to be avoided as much as possible. With such different attitudes misunderstanding is almost inevitable.

If, however, as a result of his constant invitation

SEX IN MARRIAGE

and her frequent refusal to have coitus, their divergence comes up for discussion so that each frankly expresses the thinking responsible for the two different attitudes, a compromise can easily be brought about. Even the man does not want to have coitus cheapened by too much frequency. He does not want this to happen to his wife any more than to himself. The moment he sees that from her viewpoint frequent intercourse invites such a risk, he is willing to ask less often, that he may be more sure of having full enjoyment. On the other hand, the wife, when she gets at the truth that is underneath the bad counsel she received, realizes that it is useless to attempt to continue in her marriage the spirit of courtship, and that the only thing she has to guard against is the making of coitus too commonplace.

It is not how often coitus is had that will decide the attitude taken toward it, but rather the spirit with which it is entered upon and the satisfaction that it brings. If the two are not together so often as to lead to loss of appetite there need not be any

THE LOVE ART OF THE HUSBAND

curbing of genuine desire. To attempt to reintroduce the strain of courtship would be most unfair to the husband and eventually to the wife herself, and would not tend to bring into deeper fellowship the two matrimonial partners.

The husband who is developing the art of love so far as the mental side is concerned needs to become an explorer. It is his business to encourage the give and take of thought-life, that there may not be a remnant of reticence in either husband or wife. Instead there will be a union of thought in the most extraordinary degree. Neither will hesitate to say anything that ought to be said to increase the pleasure of the sex act or to give the other a better clue as to how satisfaction may be increased. In cases not a few the first maladjustment of sex is in the realm of thinking. One of the individuals is ashamed to say what really should be known by the other, or one has an attitude toward sex that forbids complete abandonment, so that there are always brakes set against sex momentum.

The art of love also requires an adjustment in

SEX IN MARRIAGE

feeling. This might well be thought of as an adapting of different temperaments or moods. Here the difference between the two is more serious, adjustment more difficult. For example, suppose one is distinctly prosaic, the other highly romantic. These differences will intrude upon sex, and unless there is genuine effort to recognize the natural difference between the two persons, a drifting apart will often occur. The prosaic person cannot be made highly imaginative, but he can, if he so wishes, increase his sympathy for the gifts he does not possess. It is inconceivable that there would have been any affection in the first place, had there not been on his part some admiration for the different quality of the woman he married. He, therefore, needs to cater to his utmost to the aesthetic and romantic elements that she attempts to bring into their sex communion. Flowers, perfume, colored lights, different settings, ranging from woodland privacy to the cottage by the sea, will all give coitus for both husband and wife added meaning. If he cannot suggest, he can at least be ready to fall into the changing moods of the

THE LOVE ART OF THE HUSBAND

wife, whose sex life will thrive provided it is not allowed to sink to the dull routine of a gray existence.

There may be some other temperamental difference, such as sex primitiveness on one side and great refinement on the other. The husband or the wife, and it is as likely to be one as the other, may most enjoy the sex act when it approaches the simplicity that we associate with the cave man. Great passion, absolutely direct and intense vigor, are primitive characteristics that greatly stimulate some and bring them supreme satisfaction. The other member of the matrimonial duet may resent sex in such form and enjoy it only if it is disguised by greater refinement, demanding from the partner, instead of directness, a great deal of play, with sex eventually entering unobtrusively. Instead of overwhelming passion, tenderness, sympathy, and fertility of understanding bring this person more enjoyment. Evidently in such cases of sex differences the adjustment must be mostly a compromise, each honestly trying to sympathize with the other, so that they come to occupy common ground, which gives neither

SEX IN MARRIAGE

of them the extreme experience that they would naturally prefer. Such a policy of compromise is safer than an alternating program in which one has what he wills without regard for the thoughts or feelings of the other and then the second takes his turn, being indifferent to the attitudes of the first. This policy tends to strengthen the extreme demands of each and makes intercourse at times something tolerated in order that at a later time it may be more pleasurable. The art of love, so far as the man is concerned, as it pertains to temperamental adjustment, calls for adaptation. The man must seek to adapt himself as far as he can to the demands of his partner. This starts him toward a compromise, the basis upon which in such cases mutual satisfaction must be built. Even in coitus the two can be complementary rather than one becoming a carbon copy of the other.

The art of love is primarily a physical adjustment. Perhaps the key word here that more than any other reveals the secret of final good adjustment is the term, *experiment*. There must be a seeking out by

THE LOVE ART OF THE HUSBAND

the husband of the procedure which in the end will bring most enjoyment to both the wife and himself. As has already been said, the husband must not think of this as something that can be made unchanging, once the best method is discovered, so that he merely needs to repeat over and over again the same thing in marital intimacy. The art of love never becomes so simple as that. It shrivels when it becomes stereotyped. There are definite points of possible conflict which the husband as well as the wife needs to recognize. First, perhaps, is the length of coitus. It is generally thought that most men move more rapidly than do women toward the final climax. Since women do not as a rule abandon themselves quite so thoroughly to the sex experience, it may be that the difference between men and women at this point has been exaggerated, due to social influences that will more and more cease to exist.

Whatever the cause, the man is very often called upon to recognize that he needs to hold back as much as he can the arrival of the end of the sex act, that his wife may have more time to become sexu-

SEX IN MARRIAGE

ally aroused. This is not so difficult as it seems. Most men have to some extent control of their reflexes, and by a little effort can tend to retard their movement toward the climax. Meanwhile the wife finds her sensations accumulating, since her sensitivity is not so localized and she does not depend upon movement to the extent the man does for her pleasure. From actual experience, provided he is observing, the husband can learn just when to stop for a moment the onrushing of sensations, that they may not reach their climax too soon for the woman's greatest pleasure.

It is easier for most men to depend primarily upon preliminary love play that excites the woman before starting intercourse, rather than upon the man's ability to check discharge.

The husband should not be content merely to attempt to regulate his own speed in the development towards the climax, but should give heed to the conditions that influence the woman to be more or less rapid in coming to her orgasm. Observation is likely to show both the man and the woman that

THE LOVE ART OF THE HUSBAND

at certain times under certain conditions she arrives more quickly than at others. In trying to arrive at an explanation of these differences in her sex momentum, neither should be content to look too narrowly to the sex act itself. It will be found frequently that what happens during the day or considerably before the act of coitus itself determines whether at that particular time she will be slower or more rapid in reaching the climax. Of course, there are great differences between women, so that some are characteristically slow and others in comparison rather rapid. Even when a woman is habitually slow, patience and experiment will in most cases make a satisfactory adjustment between husband and wife possible.

It is sometimes their conflicting thoughts and their inability to give themselves with complete abandonment to the sex act that accounts for the slowness with which individual women arrive at a climax. Those who are free from morbid impressions gathered in childhood are less likely to have trouble in keeping pace with the movement of their hus-

SEX IN MARRIAGE

band's passion. Abnormal slowness is more likely to be the result of bad sex instruction or early shock than a condition caused by peculiarities of sex organization. It is fortunate that this is true, for the first can be more easily helped than the second. When the trouble appears to be of bodily origin, counsel should be sought from some medical specialist.

One of the questions that newly married people frequently ask is, What position should they take in coitus? The orthodox position is preferred by most men and women. There are many variations in position. If one is decidedly more agreeable to husband and wife than any other it is almost sure to be discovered after a little experimentation. If there are great differences in body size or weight a little thought will usually suggest a particular arrangement that makes the coitus the most comfortable and the most satisfying. There is nothing abnormal in a desire to depart from the most usual position.

There is more difference in the degree of intensity of the orgasm among women than among men.

THE LOVE ART OF THE HUSBAND

There are women who usually have a very slight climax so that they hardly know when they have reached the peak of sensitivity. Once it has arrived, their feeling gradually dies away until they eventually are relaxed. On the other hand, there are some whose reaction is fully as intense as that of the average man. Most women vary considerably from time to time, sometimes having a very faint and at other times a very vigorous orgasm. The degree of violence is not in itself important. If the woman is really satisfied, it makes no difference whether her climax has been very pronounced or not. At times she will pass through several noticeable orgasms before her passion comes to an end. In this she is most unlike the man, who cannot immediately start coitus after having had a climax and discharge. He will require a rest period of from fifteen or twenty minutes to several hours or even days.

CHAPTER VII

THE LOVE ART OF THE WIFE

WHO is the girl that succeeds in any new job she undertakes? The one who never makes a mistake? Far from it. Rather it is the one who is able to recognize her own errors and is capable of doing better next time. She who can think straight enough to realize what is required of her, and can face her own feelings honestly enough to forget whatever supposition of superiority clings to her—this is the girl who succeeds in her new undertaking, whether it be as wage-earner or wife.

To compare marriage to a job may seem to deny the rôle of marriage as the culmination of romance. But that is only because so few people thrill to the romance of the right job. The successful worker finds adventure and romance in her work. Marriage differs from courtship in its union of romance with

THE LOVE ART OF THE WIFE

practicality. Since these two are such strange bed-fellows, it is a blessing if humor be invited to attend their coming together.

Few marriages in this day and place start off without a full wind of romance. Nor can they travel far without bumping into the reefs of practical questions. Because of differences in early training, the man generally foresees the practical side of the physical union of marriage far more definitely and calmly than the woman, and therefore is less liable to disappointment. If the wife can approach the climax of her romantic life unhandicapped by vague forebodings or impossible expectations of bodiless ecstasy, she will not be so quick to have her feelings hurt and go cry-babying home to Mother, either literally or in the spirit.

To prepare oneself, being Woman, for the happy consummation of marriage, one has first to clear one's mind of the sweet-young-girl taboos under which one has grown up. Properly, the courtship has materially aided in this process, but the girl may have been so bound by the conventions as she in-

SEX IN MARRIAGE

terpreted them, that she aborted the natural development of love life between herself and her betrothed.

The *credo* of the well oriented bride runs something like this:

I believe in the rightness and beauty of natural sex expression as the framework of love, without which no matrimonial romance can be healthy or long lived.

I believe that any sexual gesture, play or craving of my husband or myself is natural, provided only that it demands the participation and seeks the happiness of the mate as well as the self.

Believing this, I shall cease to take pride in my outgrown maidenly reserve, and will delight in freeing myself, as rapidly as they stand revealed, from any inhibitions that may lie in the way of perfect physical and emotional communion between my husband and me.

I realize that in the world of sex I am like a child before great works of art. My powers of appreciation have not been awakened. As a three-year-old looks

THE LOVE ART OF THE WIFE

unmoved on a masterpiece of plastic art and names it "Doll," so I may fail to respond adequately to the new stimuli that my husband offers me. But at least I will not smugly flatter myself on my superiority of delicacy when this occurs, but will face the truth—that I am as stupidly inert in this realm as I might expect savages or children or uncultured adults to be when confronted by a soul-stirring work of art whose significance lies outside their experience.

Further I must go in my self-searching and dig out the heaviest impediment to my progress toward married happiness—that I am worse off in this field than child or untaught adult in the world of art, for not only am I unawakened to the wealth of possibilities spread before me: I have even been brought up under the Puritanical edicts, "This which men call beautiful is vile" and "Whatever man finds alluring must be shunned, for it is the work of the Evil One."

Now I may have thought within myself that these sayings of my elders were false, since I felt in my

SEX IN MARRIAGE

inmost being that sex was real and therefore not to be despised, but at least I had to abide by the decrees of those older and more knowing than I, so I acted as if I believed what they told me of the untrustworthiness of my own impulses toward sex fulfillment until I lost my own warmth of feeling under the shell of cool repression I wore so long.

I can see that the relationship upon which I am entering can be substantial only if I cast aside all hand-me-down attitudes of coldness and meet my husband more than half way in discovering the genuine warmth of my physical hunger for him. I can understand that the environment of his adolescence and early manhood has been such as to permit in him the very directness of thought and frankness of desire that my upbringing has practically stolen from me.

As a result of our unequal approach to the romantic consummation of marriage, it is probable that we shall often misunderstand each other. When this happens I will not rest until I get to the bottom of our difficulty, for only so can we find our way

THE LOVE ART OF THE WIFE

through the perplexities of our new relationship to the firm ground of complete harmony in our sex life.

I realize that my husband cannot always guess my hidden reactions and buried desires, and I will, therefore, make myself break through my vestigial shyness to let him know my longings, and the reasons, so far as I understand them, for my aversions. I will remember that my man, being human, may also be the victim of early repression that prevents his full and free acceptance of the value of sex in all its natural manifestations. In unimportant details of sex play, it may happen that one of us will like what the other dislikes, but frank discussion will usually start the melting away of these dislikes, so that in time, as we become more sure of ourselves and of each other, we are better able to satisfy each other's needs.

Aware of the fact that we are both novices in the art of ministering to each other's physical love needs, I shall not allow disappointment to invade our honeymoon, but will remind myself that this is

SEX IN MARRIAGE

a period of beginnings when awkwardness and dumbness cover the intensity of tenderness that gropes for ways of adding to the happiness of the beloved. As the shyness and misunderstanding of the early days of courtship gave way to unshakable confidence, so the uncertainty and ineptness of the first marital experiences will merge into the supreme joy that goes with the perfect adjustment of the later honeymoon days.

Sex adjustment, like courtship, involves the give and take of two persons. I shall not be so naïve as to suppose that I can give adequate outlet to my own primal urge or the highest joy to my mate by playing only a passive rôle in our physical love-making.

Starting with such an attitude as this, the new wife may never be able to understand why any wives are less than superlatively happy, so smoothly does she move on through the increasing satisfactions that attend her introduction to the joys of mature sex life. If this is not her experience, it may

THE LOVE ART OF THE WIFE

be that she is but giving verbal allegiance to the idea of sex as a rightful part of her life, while in reality she still fights against disrobing herself of her maidenly reserve. To check up on her actual acceptance of the new rôle she has taken over, let her ask herself these questions:

1. Do I still run blindly away from sex, impressing my husband with his need of being careful not to shock or disgust me by plain speech and direct action?

2. Am I honest enough in my adherence to my new code of adult sex expression to realize that *shock* is but another way of spelling *thrill*, since I am shocked or disgusted by that which would naturally thrill me, did not my virginal taboos interfere?

3. To what extent can I rid myself of these taboos and learn to welcome physical sensation for its own sake, plus the delight of knowing it a bond between me and my mate?

Few of us have escaped childhood experiences that strongly condition us against one or another

SEX IN MARRIAGE

harmless form of sex play. Recognizing the cause of our antipathy, we may succeed in reëducating ourselves in this regard; at any rate we cease thinking of our particular brand of coldness as a virtue. The moment we hope to overcome these deficiencies, we are on the road to freeing ourselves from them. This is an advantage because of the importance of sex play as a means of preparing both actors, but especially the female, for participation in coitus.

Whether by nature or as a result of her training in repression, the woman is usually slower than the man in reaching the climax of the sex act. For this reason, it is necessary that the time required to bring to completion her part in intercourse be shortened by anticipatory sex play which awakens her passion.

For woman, as for man, sexual intercourse relieves tense nerves, stabilizes the emotions, and vivifies or rejuvenates the personality. Even from the thoroughly selfish viewpoint of wanting to make the most of herself, that she may be attractive and free from "nervousness" or gloom, any wife is wise who

THE LOVE ART OF THE WIFE

develops her ability to respond to the love needs of her husband, until she, too, becomes sex-conscious, and learns to recognize the symptoms of her own sex hunger, then without false modesty takes steps to satisfy this basic physical want as readily as she would prepare to eat or sleep when those bodily needs make known their presence.

There is no greater surety of permanency of affection than the meeting of husband and wife in a conjugal embrace that lifts each to a higher plane of happiness, and is followed by the relaxation that restores the whole organism of each to its optimum condition. No man likes to receive sex favors from his wife, while compelled to admit that he is unable to give her as much pleasure and relief from strain as he receives.

By one safe standard a woman may judge whether she is successfully completing the sex cycle of desire, shared pleasure, and satisfaction. So generalized is her sex feeling that if she only allows the mood of excitement that possessed her to die down gradually, as she lies quietly reveling in contempla-

SEX IN MARRIAGE

tion of the peace she has brought her man, her own state of tension will gradually disappear, until she, too, sinks into the perfect sleep that is the mark of sexual completion.

At this point the novice, uncertain of herself, may spoil the event by her ignorance of biological facts. Romantically supposing the love embrace to be solely emotional, using the body as a mere tool, she ignorantly expects her husband, after he has achieved sexual gratification, to make love to her more fervently than before. When this does not occur, being altogether against nature, the uncomprehending, self-centered wife may either tease her husband with unseasonable demands for attention or nurse hurt feelings as she mulls over the sudden vanishing of her husband's absorption in her. The understanding wife learns to keep step with her mate; then, when coitus is finished, she is as ready as he to be left in peace.

The couple who want to travel onward from the first thrills of honeymoon days, so that custom will not stale the bliss of physical nearness, should never

THE LOVE ART OF THE WIFE

allow any form of love-making to become routine, or, worse still, a duty. The bride who reminds her husband to kiss her whenever he leaves or enters the house is killing the spontaneity of his caresses for her and forcing him to replace the irregularly recurring impulse to fondle her, with the prosaic habit of osculating punctiliously, in much the same way that he uses a doormat or toothbrush—because it is the scheduled time for this performance, not because he is irresistibly driven to the act.

Better trained in the art of courtship than in the ways of marriage, the disappointed wife may try to relive the dead joys of courtship days, by acting as if the peripheral erogenous zones, eyes, lips, cheeks, hair, hands, and breasts, were more aesthetic or more unworldly than the basic love centers that are dedicated to unmistakably specialized biological purpose. Knowing that peripheral excitation, originally stronger in her than in the male, has been excessively developed by permitted freedoms of her chaste maidenhood, the wife whose goal is harmonious sex adjustment does not stir up her man

SEX IN MARRIAGE

for the sake of satisfying her vanity by putting him again in the position of suppliant lover.

This does not mean that sex stimulation should always be followed at once by coitus, but that sex stimulation should be recognized as such, and not misnamed and esteemed as a higher, because less earthly, form of love.

The wife whose sex needs are being adequately met will scarcely be tempted to indulge in jealous thoughts, so sure is she of herself. This is a weighty advantage in her married career, for nothing breeds estrangement so quickly as jealousy. Founded usually on nothing more than the jealous person's perverted imagination, fed by her feeling of inferiority, it soon makes any home so miserable as to drive away affection and loyalty.

The woman aware of her sex needs may find that, other things being equal, her periods of most intense craving for sex fulfillment bear some relation to her menses, coming, perhaps, either just before or just after the monthly periods. She who doubts the warmth of her passionate nature will do well to

THE LOVE ART OF THE WIFE

accept the aid of her "time of the month" in educating her sex powers. Those who had supposed this part of the month ought to be especially avoided, unless one were so selfish or stupid as to have a child every nine months, may be reassured by the fact that the theory that any part of the month is "safe" is now generally discredited.

No woman who wishes to live a complete life, enjoying and benefiting from her sex experiences as she enjoys good health and benefits from food and sleep, can afford to handicap herself by suffering from removable superstition and ignorance in regard to that portion of "the personal hygiene of women" which consists in birth control. Constant worry lest a premature conception take place is in itself enough to prevent many a woman from losing herself in the exhilaration of the marital relation. Impractical or ill-timed contraceptive practices overshadow the desired climax of intercourse and give the woman little chance to enjoy the refreshing sleep that is her due. Any woman who gets less satisfaction than her husband does out of their marital relations cannot

SEX IN MARRIAGE

afford to delay in consulting a reputable physician—if possible a gynecologist or obstetrician—in regard to the details of her “personal hygiene,” to find out if she is blindly interfering with the regimen most conducive to a healthy sex life.

That wife may know her love life to be wholesome, who notices that instead of having to use all her will power to keep even-tempered in the face of annoyances, she sails calmly on through days that may be hard or easy but rarely have the power to upset her equanimity. Emotionally well balanced, she takes as trifles the untoward incidents of daily life, which, under other circumstances, would loom mountain high and precipitate cloud-bursts of bad temper.

No woman need distrust her ability to make satisfactory adjustments in her married love life, since open-mindedness and the desire to succeed are the two most important factors.

No marriage can be underwritten for success which is not based on the biologically wholesome expression of love between husband and wife, as

THE LOVE ART OF THE WIFE

well as on community of interests and staunchness of individual character. As sex adjustment insures freedom from personal tension, so a harmonious sex union smooths away the friction that occurs as two distinct personalities readjust their lives to fit each other's needs.

CHAPTER VIII

SOME COMMON SEX PROBLEMS OF MARRIAGE

The Frequency of Coitus. There are those who have such a wrong idea concerning sex adjustment that when they come to the question of how much intercourse they should have, they seek from some authority instruction as fixed as the cookbook when it says that there must be so many cups of flour and sugar and water for the making of a loaf of bread. This asking for a fixed schedule for coitus is about as great a mistake as could possibly be made, for it reveals that the adjustment is looked upon as something so mechanical that it can be given an unchanging formula. The facts are quite the other way. There is sexual excess and it is harmful; there is also, as some forget, sex deficiency, which likewise brings its bad consequences. To find the golden mean between two extremes always requires judg-

SEX PROBLEMS OF MARRIAGE

ment, and this is true of sex intercourse just as it is of everything else in the world.

It is in the first years of marriage that the temptation of excess is greatest. Linked with this question, How long has one been married? is the other, What are the ages of the two people who are attempting to make sensible adjustment? Sex activity is like any other in that young people have more vitality to express, and recuperate from muscular and nervous fatigue quicker than those who are older. The quantity of physical exercise that is desirable in the twenties may be for some extremely dangerous after forty. Although there cannot be any hard and fast rule about the amount of coitus desirable for persons at different ages, this fundamental variation between people must be kept in mind.

Then there is another difference between people which must not be forgotten if any reasonable program of sex development is to be worked out. People differ in their sex desire and their sex needs just as they do along other lines. There is no such thing as a standard male or standard female in the sense that

SEX IN MARRIAGE

they all share a definite sex vigor. This peculiarity cannot be fully explained, but it has to be recognized. It is similar to the unexpected resistance that we find one organism showing in its fight against an infectious disease, as compared with the lesser fighting power of the body of another individual. It is clear from experience that body vigor is not necessarily related to muscular development, and that a body vigorous in one respect is not always vigorous in all. It is useless to attempt to formulate a wise program for sex intercourse if this fundamental difference between individuals is ignored.

In the problem as it faces those who are married there must always be two sides. It is just this that makes sex happiness the product of adjustment. The man may be more vigorous than the woman or it may be the reverse. In such a case, as in other coöperative undertakings, the pace must for the most part be determined by him or her who has the lesser vigor and the weaker desire.

Another factor that is frequently left out of account is the manner of living of the individuals. It

SEX PROBLEMS OF MARRIAGE

is a common observation that travel, for those unaccustomed to it, frequently leads to sex stimulation so that intercourse is desired when it might not have been in the normal order of things if the husband and wife had remained at home. This is just one illustration of the fact that the sort of experiences one has from day to day increase or decrease sex desire. In countless cases husbands who have been stimulated by some occurrence during the day, even when this has not been felt in consciousness at the time, return after the end of work with sex hunger that they would not have had if it were not for the excitement they experienced. This frequently happens to the husband but seldom to the woman because she is so tied to household routine. We have here a basis for sex incompatibility that comes out of environmental contacts rather than actual differences between individuals. Of course, it is most important to recognize that these conditions that come from the manner of life of husband or wife may lead to excess and unreasonable desire when the circumstances of age, length of marriage, and

SEX IN MARRIAGE

physical condition are taken into account. The desire for intercourse is not itself a guarantee that coitus is beneficial, for it may be for one or the other an excess and contrary to their physical and mental welfare. Yet the influence of the manner of living cannot be left out of consideration, since it has such a decided effect upon the amount of coitus that is desired.

An illustration of the opposite sort is the bad effect of irritation and anxiety, born of trouble at the office for the man or responsibilities with children for the woman at home, so that the nervous system is not free to respond to coitus as frequently as it otherwise would. The question, how much coitus can be wisely had, must be decided in the light of all the facts that influence the mental and physical life of both the man and the woman.

The problem is even more complicated, since there are not only variations between individuals and circumstances, but each person varies from time to time both in his sex desire and in the amount of sex intercourse he can safely have without lowering

SEX PROBLEMS OF MARRIAGE

his daily physical efficiency. In the case of animals we find an ebbing and flowing of sex vitality according to season, and this is considered true in less degree of men and women. At present differences from time to time in sex desire and vigor are largely accounted for by definite influences. One is general health. With apparent exceptions in the case of certain diseases, sex desire and need are in proportion to the general well-being of the body. Separation is another influence. After being apart for days or weeks the husband and wife usually have a marked temporary increase in sex desire. Men who accept professional strain or enter upon severe competition often notice a change in sex, their desire sometimes being increased and sometimes disappearing until the normal order of things returns.

The most important changeableness, which, in spite of its meaning for the newly married, can be taken too seriously, is what is called the sex rhythm. This seems to be pronounced in the life of many women and in a milder form is characteristic of many men. With regard to this, as with many other

SEX IN MARRIAGE

things that concern wholesome sex life, there is not at present the carefully gathered information that is needed to give us certainty in regard to the facts. Such evidence as we have tells us that in the case of many women, at least, there is considerable variation during the month in the amount of sex desire, and that if there be no interference with this over a long period of time there will be a tendency to have sex intercourse at stated times with reference to the periods of the monthly flow. This is not a definite law so that all women are alike, nor is it true that in the sex life of the individual woman who has a definite rhythm sex desire will always follow its usual rule. The trend usually is not so strong that it cannot easily be broken in upon by the influence of events, so that any experience that is particularly stimulating will bring sex craving to the surface and for the time being make the general rhythm of little significance. There has been too much dogmatism on the basis of a few individual reactions. For example, there is no evidence aside from individual cases that there is one time during

SEX PROBLEMS OF MARRIAGE

the month when women are so keenly sexed that this is the only time they can have intercourse with maximum satisfaction. At present we have to be content, in estimating the strength of this monthly periodicity, with the opinions expressed by women who are asked for information. Such women have seldom kept any definite record over a long enough period of time to be absolutely reliable. Unfortunately, the asking of the question contributes suggestion. Apparently some women assume that it is a part of normal sex life to have a noticeable monthly rhythm. Hamilton, in as careful a study as has yet been made, found that nineteen of the hundred women who gave him information had no periodicity of sex desire so far as they could discover.

Both the man and the woman are apt to find that their sex desire runs strongly for two or three days in succession. At least, though by no means a standard experience, this is relatively common. They wish, for example, to have intercourse two or three times within two or three days, and then for a considerable period, a week or more, they do not have

SEX IN MARRIAGE

any strong urge toward coitus. In any case it certainly is not a sensible adjustment to attempt a program of intercourse at a certain period of the month or after a definite duration of time; to have intercourse the twelfth day after the end of menstruation or to have it every third day is too arbitrary and mechanical to lead the majority of young men and women to as rich and wholesome a sex communion as they should achieve. Adjustment is not the same thing as adopting a schedule.

Every pleasure requires self-control, and there are those who overindulge in sex activity, just as there are people who eat too much. Nevertheless, there is danger that the warning against excess that appears in certain sorts of books of counsel for the newly wed become a cause for unnecessary anxiety. The consequences that are charged against excessive intercourse in such literature include nearly every ill that can happen to the human body except the toothache or a broken bone.

Indeed, it is seldom that there is such a clear, causal relation between the amount of coitus that

SEX PROBLEMS OF MARRIAGE

has been practiced and body illness, that the latter can be said to be caused by excessive coitus. In most cases overindulgence is only one of many expressions of lack of self-control. Associated with sexual excess there is usually drinking of alcohol, lack of exercise, overeating, and a general unhygienic way of living.

There is a common notion which also is popularized by some of the books on sex, that it is only the man who can suffer from excess. There is a sense in which the man suffers more, for necessarily it is he rather than the woman who can become impotent, but to make this the basis for the assertion that it is only the man who suffers is to misinterpret the sexual life of the woman. For both the man and the woman coitus is essentially a nervous experience, and the mechanism involved will show in the life of both the male and the female the results of overmuch stimulation.

Although there cannot be a definite statement regarding the quantity of intercourse that is wise for all individuals under all circumstances, it is not so

SEX IN MARRIAGE

difficult as it may seem to discover through experience the amount of intercourse that is desirable. Three tests can be made that will help any couple who are honestly trying to do what is best for them.

First, does the desire arise spontaneously without any artificial stimulation?

In the second place, wholesome coitus brings as its aftermath a pleasing relaxation. If, instead of this, one is left irritable, restless, depressed, or with a feeling of general debility, it is evident that something is wrong, and if intercourse has been frequent it is reasonable to suppose that the sufferer has been going to excess.

In the third place, normal, wholesome intercourse should bring feelings of vigor and self-confidence on the following day. Those who keep their eye upon the strength of the desire, relaxation and subsequent vitality seldom go astray in their sexual program.

Intercourse should not take place when the woman is having her menstrual flow. This needs to be said because occasionally a woman has or thinks she has her strongest sex desire at this time. She is

SEX PROBLEMS OF MARRIAGE

in no condition for intercourse, and aside from hygienic reasons her body should not have placed upon it nervous excitation of the special sex mechanism. If this precaution is not taken immediate evil may not appear, but in the long run it may prove detrimental to any woman to have intercourse during menstruation.

In thinking of excess one must not merely consider the physical result. This is extremely important, since there are those who weaken their sex appetite by overindulgence. There are psychic characteristics that go with satisfactory intercourse, and if the experience be repeated until one is satiated it becomes little more than a physical act of meager pleasure. Those who overindulge are sure to have intercourse when they are not very eager for it. With feeble desire goes meagerness of satisfaction. This is likely to show itself in one's feeling and thought about coitus even before it is registered in the nervous structure itself. Indeed, it would not be far wrong to say that whenever coitus is accepted without much desire for it, it represents for the in-

SEX IN MARRIAGE

dividual feebly interested an excess, which is bound to have some influence in decreasing the value of the sex relationship.

Impotency. Recently in conversation a professional man somewhat over fifty remarked that he was glad that sex for him had become a thing of the past. It is difficult to imagine any one feeling this way about the departure of sex vigor. Possibly with the coming of the philosophic years this is not so uncommon as one would suppose, but for the young person at least any thought of loss of sex vigor brings a tremendous fear. As a result of wrong information, or anxiety because of early licentiousness, there are those who in facing marriage ask the question whether or not they will be potent. It is rare that there is any lack of potency because of degeneration or malformation of physical structure. There may be, however, permanent or temporary impotency as a result of illness, drugs, especially alcohol, or the gradual breaking down of general health. During acute illness sex vigor generally recedes. Alcohol, in spite of releasing inhibition and

SEX PROBLEMS OF MARRIAGE

seeming at first to stimulate, if it be taken in any quantity soon makes the sex act impossible for the man by its attack upon the nervous centers involved in intercourse. There are other drugs not so commonly used which also have power eventually to break down sex vigor.

It is the psychic side of impotency that concerns us most because this is generally the basis of trouble. The man who is very nervous for any cause finds intercourse difficult and frequently impossible. Disgust is an emotion which checks at once the reflex activity that makes it possible for the man to carry out the sex act; fear, whatever form it takes, also produces at the moment impotency for the man. When intercourse is being attempted under circumstances that create anxiety lest one be discovered, or if the conscience refuses to consent to the act, the man may find it impossible, in spite of his desires, to carry through intercourse. Perhaps the problem can best be summarized by saying that any form of emotional conflict which makes it difficult for the man to commit himself wholeheartedly to

SEX IN MARRIAGE

sex intercourse may make it impossible for the act to be carried out.

The least significant of all the various forms of impotency is that which comes from temporary nervousness. This, as has already been said, is easily aroused through overanxiety at the beginning of marriage. Patience on the part of the man and understanding on the part of the woman will usually soon remove this obstacle to married happiness. If the man continues to be impotent for any length of time, the situation is more serious and medical advice should be sought without hesitation.

Frigidity. Frigidity in the woman is very like impotency in the man. It is, according to authorities, to be thought of as rare or common according to the way it is interpreted. As a biological fact it is apparently so rare that there are doctors of experience who assert that no healthy woman is ever frigid. Nature seldom inflicts structural defects in the sex equipment of either the man or woman. If frigidity in the woman is extremely rare as a biological fact, it is, on the other hand, exceedingly common as a

SEX PROBLEMS OF MARRIAGE

psychic experience. Since it makes little difference, so long as the condition exists, whether frigidity is a result of body defect or some mental cause, the predicament of many women is most unfortunate. When the causes of this misfortune are analyzed, it is found that frigidity results in the woman in much the same way that impotency does in the man. It also is largely the product of emotional conflict.

One of the common causes of frigidity in woman is chronic disappointment because, although the woman is constantly stimulated, she is rarely satisfied by the husband. Never reaching normal orgasm the woman gradually learns to protect herself from disappointment by not entering wholeheartedly into the sex experience. This in time leads her to become frigid. Fear operates upon her in the same way that it does on the man. Hatred also may be carried over into the sex act, leading the woman to smother the feeling that naturally would be aroused, until by such a struggle she becomes frigid. Illness, by robbing her of necessary vitality, will make her frigid in the same manner that it makes the man impo-

SEX IN MARRIAGE

tent. Her attitude toward sex is more often the cause of trouble than it is in the case of the man, producing, as it does, emotional conflict which necessarily reduces her sex interest until it fades away.

The frigid woman may not always be without sex passion. Because of this, one has to add, frigidity is sometimes the result of the wrong man. Pathological literature is replete with cases of women who are frigid to their husbands, while under other circumstances they are extremely passionate. It is just this that reveals how deep-seated sex incompatibility can become in the unhappy marriage. It is in the psychic by-products of sex that the maladjustments occur. From this love protects.

The temporary non-awakening of sex that is sometimes found in women who are newly married must not be mistaken for frigidity. The sex machinery does not start immediately, but unless this indifference persists it must not be misinterpreted as frigidity. Whatever the cause, the frigid woman must be thought of as somebody that requires treat-

SEX PROBLEMS OF MARRIAGE

ment. Such problems come frequently to the psychiatrist, but rarely from the home where affection runs strong.

Sterility. Not long since, on a railroad journey, I was talking with a scientist who eventually confessed that the great disappointment of his life was the fact that he had no children and that this had nearly wrecked the happiness of his wife. I immediately asked what effort he had made to discover the cause, when to my surprise he said that although they had thought some of asking medical help they had never taken that step. If this could be true of a scientist who in his profession is in the habit of studying the causes of the result he observes, it is not surprising that many accept the tragedy of infertility without seeking its explanation. This is most unfortunate, since in so many cases simple treatment by the specialist brings results at once, making it possible for a child to be born.

It is a great mistake to suppose, as apparently many do, that sterility is only caused by venereal disease. It is true that gonorrhea is a chief cause of

SEX IN MARRIAGE

infertility in both male and female, but there are many other causes and some of them are easily remedied by medical treatment. Among these are too great acidity in the vagina of the woman, the position of the uterus which may block the entrance of the spermatozoa, the growth of a tumor which may prevent the woman's fertilization, and a diseased condition of the ductless glands, which seem to have been proved by recent study to operate upon the fertility as they do on other aspects of body health. Ill health that lowers the vitality also appears to operate by lessening fertility.

One of the strangest causes of infertility, fortunately rare, is an unexplained biological incompatibility which makes a woman and man infertile, although each of them may at a subsequent remarriage have children. It is not unreasonable to suppose that some of these cases are really the result of temporary vaginal acidity or of gonorrheal infection which eventually clears itself so that fertilization again becomes possible.

Doctors who deal with the problem of infertility

SEX PROBLEMS OF MARRIAGE

tell us that in about one-third of the cases the man is the infertile partner. When this is true, the fact can be quickly demonstrated by a microscopic examination of the semen. In the case of the woman it is not always easy to find the true state of affairs.

Venereal Disease. No layman should seek from a book information as to how to diagnose or treat either gonorrhea or syphilis. If there is any suspicion of either disease a competent physician should be consulted at once. This discussion, therefore, limits itself to that information which one needs to have in order to know when he should seek the doctor. If either the man or woman about to marry knows that he or she has ever had gonorrhea, it would be a crime against love not to go straight to a good doctor for an examination in order to discover whether or not the marriage can safely take place. His counsel should be followed faithfully without hesitation. When the woman or man has no past history of gonorrhea, there is only need of knowing the signs of acute infection. The infection of the man is not likely to be unnoticed by him. He will have copious

SEX IN MARRIAGE

discharge from the penis with smarting, and for several days suffer pain enough to attract his attention. In the case of the woman the infection is not always so obvious. She may already have a vaginal discharge, leucorrhea, since this catarrhal condition is not uncommon among American girls and women. If, however, she has more discharge or it changes color, has a disagreeable odor, or produces some smarting and irritation, she should be suspicious. As a matter of fact, the wise woman will not only want her leucorrhea microscopically tested, but will insist upon its treatment and attempted cure.

The microscope, in the hands of the skillful technician, will detect in both the man and the woman acute gonorrheal infection. So much has been wisely said of late regarding the seriousness of gonorrhea that it does not seem as if any reader would dare treat the matter lightly or run any risk. Gonorrhea at the start is a local infection. The danger is that it spreads, reaching points in both the woman and the man almost impossible to treat satisfactorily. Because of this the risk of the infection is increased

SEX PROBLEMS OF MARRIAGE

by neglect or delay of treatment. What the doctors can cure rather quickly if they get at it in the beginning may bring most disastrous results if it is free to spread its contagion for any length of time.

The success of treatment depends, first, upon the virility of infection. There is considerable variation in the vitality of the invading organism. Second, the quickness with which the treatment is obtained. Third, the efficiency of the treatment given. To seek a drug store rather than a physician for a cure for gonorrhea is as foolish as to go to a barber to be cured of typhoid fever. Fourth, the resistance of the individual body. Just as the invading strains differ, so also some bodies strongly resist infection and assist cure, while others easily succumb to the attack.

The question whether those who have had syphilis should marry and if they marry whether they should have children is a concrete problem to be decided in each individual case by a competent doctor. Since the Wassermann test has such value in detecting the presence of syphilis, many men and

SEX IN MARRIAGE

women voluntarily seek a blood test before marriage. This test has become part of the routine of many health examiners, and since no one can be guaranteed against the risk of syphilitic infection in the ordinary routine of life, a periodic test of both the man and woman seems good common sense; it is certainly better than having morbid fears of possible contagion, or becoming a victim without knowing it of a disease whose menace is in proportion to the development it has made.

If, however, one prefers to wait for something suspicious, he must look out for a sore appearing on the genitals, or a sore anywhere that does not heal within reasonable time, or any peculiar rash. If the slightest suspicion of syphilis exists, one must hasten not to a drug store or library, but to a reputable physician, who will either take the case himself or send it to a specialist. The quicker the doctor gets the case, the more effective the treatment.

Pregnancy. The proper care of a woman in pregnancy cannot be given by any book, but should be obtained at first hand by visiting a reputable phy-

SEX PROBLEMS OF MARRIAGE

sician who is prepared to take care of the case. There are, however, some questions that need to be answered to help the husband and wife know when they should seek medical service. There are three signs of pregnancy upon which physicians depend for early diagnosis. First is the disappearing of the monthly flow. This by itself is not a sure sign of pregnancy, for there are other conditions that delay or stop menstruation. In the healthy woman, especially if she has been regular in the past, the disappearance of her monthly flow is almost sure to indicate pregnancy, and a doctor should be visited at once. When the ceasing of menstruation is due to some other cause there is equal need of obtaining medical advice.

Second, when the breasts begin to swell and become slightly tender there is added evidence that conception has taken place. Third, a great many women suffer during the early period of pregnancy or even longer from nausea, commonly called "morning sickness" because of its proneness to be most noticeable early in the day. This is a distress-

SEX IN MARRIAGE

ing feature connected with pregnancy, although there are women so fortunate as to have little or no trouble. On the other hand, some suffer throughout pregnancy. The important thing for the husband and wife to know is that the modern, well-trained physician can very greatly decrease this unpleasantness. It is not now the burden that it once was, because science understands its treatment so much better than used to be true. It is in the doctor's care of such details as this that the husband and wife can estimate his skill. If it is apparent that the doctor chosen has no interest in giving the woman reasonable care, including periodic examinations of the urine, one had better find a doctor alive to modern methods in handling pregnancy. No doctor should be permitted to dismiss a pregnancy case without making a careful vaginal examination of the woman six or eight weeks after the birth of the baby, to ascertain whether a slight repair operation is needed. Neglect of this detail causes years of physical misery in the lives of countless mothers after they pass the forty-year mark.

SEX PROBLEMS OF MARRIAGE

Intercourse during Pregnancy. The question whether husband and wife shall continue coitus during pregnancy is sure to arise, and the best thing is to seek the doctor's advice and follow it absolutely. He is likely to permit intercourse unless there appears to be risk of miscarriage or evidence that it is harmful to the woman. It is rarely true that sex passion ceases for the woman while she is pregnant. The doctor will surely advise the couple to be extremely careful during the later months, using a lateral position and observing scrupulous cleanliness, in order not to injure the growing foetus or infect the birth canal, and refraining altogether from intercourse during the last six or eight weeks before childbirth and a similar period afterward. He also will advise against intercourse during the period of the month when the woman would be normally going through menstruation. At that particular time sex excitement is more likely to cause miscarriage or premature delivery. The one thing that needs to be kept in mind is that the doctor can not only be asked for advice, but if any sus-

SEX IN MARRIAGE

picious change occurs he must be told, so that with the knowledge of the new situation he can again advise free or moderate intercourse, or abstinence.

In this problem, as in every other that arises during pregnancy, the husband must be prepared to take his share of responsibility. It is most unfair to ask the woman to run any risk of miscarriage in order to make the husband's sex life a little easier during the latter half of the nine months' period. The husband must be prepared for nervous changes and emotional instability, for, unfortunately, some women suffer along these lines during a part or all of pregnancy.

With the coming of the child, the problem ceases to be one of sex and becomes that of parenthood, but the husband may wisely remember that the subsequent sex life may be greatly influenced by what happens during and after confinement. If the woman's sex life is to continue to be vigorous and satisfying, everything possible needs to be done to make the confinement as normal as possible, that the coming of the child may not cause any decrease

SEX PROBLEMS OF MARRIAGE

in the wife's sex passion. When this regard for the woman's welfare is carried into practice it is found that during the month of her return from the hospital after the birth of the child, the husband should give her assistance in caring for the baby, especially at night, as well as arranging for the needed household help by day. Otherwise the burden may be so heavy that the wife's return to normal life is slower than it ought to be and there may be memories of her experience that will make her reluctant to be a mother again, or will take from her the confidence that she previously had in her husband's unselfish love. If affection ever needs to prove itself, it is during the time when the wife carries the child, when with risk and suffering she brings it into life, and when she undertakes its care shortly after passing through the ordeal of childbirth. It is at these times that the thoughtless husband may easily lose his wife's love and with it their previous wholesome sex adjustment.

CHAPTER IX

BIRTH CONTROL

NOTHING better illustrates the change that has come regarding birth control than the fact that no book dealing with sex can leave the subject out of its contents. Whether one favors or disapproves birth control, it can no longer be ignored. Perhaps the most satisfactory way to deal with the subject in this discussion is to answer the questions that the newly married are likely to ask.

First, What is birth control? The term birth control carries a wrong impression. By those who are not thoroughly acquainted with the facts as they now are, it is supposed that science has at last gotten control of conditions that lead to pregnancy, so that those who have intercourse can decide whether or not to have children, with the certainty that their decision is final. As a matter of fact this is not true. What we now have is birth limitation rather than

BIRTH CONTROL

complete control, since every little while some one who trusted a common method of birth control finds herself pregnant.

It is, of course, true that certain methods are less hazardous than others, but it is too much to claim that as yet science has complete control, so that no one need fear becoming pregnant unless this is her choice. Birth control in this more limited sense of contraceptives is not new. We find that even among savage tribes there have been efforts to prevent conception, some of which were in a measure successful. The difference now is that the methods of birth control have become more efficient and are widely known. Not long ago birth control practices were confined to the professional and wealthy groups, but now birth control has become known to all groups and is practiced by individuals in the poorest class as well as the wealthiest. In some countries training in birth control practices has become a public policy, while in others, like Italy at the present time, the laws against any kind of birth control are especially severe.

SEX IN MARRIAGE

Second, Is it wrong to practice birth control? To some birth control in any form seems immoral, usually because such practices seem to be contrary to religious teaching; others regard knowledge of birth control as the most promising of all social changes and consider any legislation that attempts to limit knowledge of birth control a great social wrong, as well as unjust to the individuals who need information. In such a controversy each person must make his own decision, but for wholesome sex life it is of the utmost importance that if birth control practices be carried on it shall be as the result of an ethical decision, so that conscience will not oppose sex when contraceptive methods are used. There are those who do not think it wrong to limit the coming of children, provided it is done by abstinence from intercourse, but believe birth control by the use of contraceptives a sin. They recognize the strain involved in such a domestic policy as abstinence, but regard any other birth control method as immoral.

There are others who believe in birth control for certain classes, in which of course they themselves

BIRTH CONTROL

are placed, but regard it highly undesirable that the great mass of people, especially the working classes, should discover effective means of controlling birth. There are still others who regard the coming of birth control as one of the great scientific achievements which will bring happiness or woe according to the use made of it; while there are yet others who appear to think that the mere popularizing of birth control is the one great social need of our time, and who find it difficult to recognize that any evil can come from the extension of birth control knowledge.

The newly married can hardly escape in these times facing squarely what their policy is going to be and why. Here, as elsewhere, the desires and beliefs of both parties must be taken into account. It would surely be unfair for either husband or wife, without regard for the thought of the other, to take command and decide the policy regarding contraceptives without any consideration of the other's feeling or thought. But it does seem just to recognize that the woman is more involved than the man in pregnancy and also later in the nurture of chil-

SEX IN MARRIAGE

dren, so that she should have a larger voice in the discussion than the man.

Third, Are birth control practices harmful? This question generally involves two different sorts of interests. In one the thought is with reference to the physical harm or harmlessness of birth control methods; the other attempts to estimate the social influence of birth control as seen in the individuals who practice it, their family life, and the great society round about. In regard to the physical results of birth control practices, there is at present much discussion but no very clear conclusion. Probably all students of the problem would admit that under certain circumstances some kinds of birth control methods are distinctly harmful. Some of these are very ancient and have been widely practiced for many generations. In estimating the effect of any birth control practice, one must think not merely of the local sex organs, but also of the nervous system itself, and above all else of the general health. In contrast with the cases where birth control practices seem to lead to local irritation or nervous injury

BIRTH CONTROL

or an apparent decrease of normal health, are those cases in which the woman is saved from repeated childbirths. Leading advocates of birth control insist that in these cases the woman's general health has been greatly conserved by contraceptive methods.

One of the most important of all questions is, Do contraceptive methods lead to sterility? Unfortunately, for those who seek certainty, the conditions involving barrenness are so complicated that there can be great differences of opinion regarding the effect of contraception upon fertility. Doctors of experience claim that after a certain time on account of failure to reproduce the organism loses, at least in individual cases, the power of reproduction. Others insist that these cases do not yield clear evidence of causal influences in such a direct way as to make it certain that the contraceptive method is responsible for the barrenness. No layman is qualified to pass judgment where the doctors so differ. If there be any worry about the use of a definite contraceptive method on account of its possible effect

SEX IN MARRIAGE

upon fertility one should consult the doctor, stating frankly the method used, and let him pass judgment upon whether or not harm is likely to occur and whether there is any risk of losing fertility.

The question whether it is harmful to practice birth control is asked by some who are interested primarily in its moral and social results. So far as the individual is concerned, if birth control seems wrong its practice necessarily has the same effect on conscience that comes from doing anything that is interpreted as evil. If one is not content to follow mere feeling, which, of course, is explained by one's early training, the question then becomes one of fact. Does or does not the practice of birth control hurt the moral character of those who make use of contraceptive methods? This, of course, is the rational way of settling the controversy.

Any one who is acquainted with the discussions *pro* and *con* birth control will come across arguments against contraception, based on the assertion that the knowledge of birth control is leading to an increase in sex intercourse among the unmarried.

BIRTH CONTROL

Although this problem is pertinent in the discussion of birth control in general, it is not an essential part of this present discussion, which is concerned with birth control as a problem for the married. To ignore it at this point, however, would seem to some readers an evading of a part of the problem as to whether birth control is socially harmful. There are naturally no reliable statistics that prove whether or not with the popularizing of birth control there has been an increase in illicit intercourse. One has to pass judgment upon the basis of such facts as one does have.

Although this matter of a changing code among young people can be, and in my belief is, exaggerated, my own opinion, which I express frankly but with no sense of dogmatism, is that birth control is influencing the sex code toward greater freedom among young people to a degree that sooner or later is bound to influence marriage. Elsewhere, especially in *The Marriage Crisis*, I have considered this problem. In the present chapter birth control is not considered in the larger social viewpoint, but with

SEX IN MARRIAGE

reference to its influence upon wholesome sex life in marriage.

Fourth, Is contraception successful? This is a pertinent question and one that is sure to arise wherever birth control is not taboo. We have evidence that throws light on this question, but we do not have the certainty that the questioner would like. A great many men and women in this country practice birth control in some form or other, but naturally they do not report either success or failure in any statistical form that permits us to estimate the efficiency of the great mass of those who are using contraception. We have to depend upon the answers that have been made in two or three investigations carried on by specialists interested in the problem, and upon the reports made by some of the birth control clinics that keep careful records of their services. It is obvious that on account of the difficulty of getting information regarding contraception there are many who practice birth control with assurance but without the knowledge that justifies confidence. They rely on some method until it fails

BIRTH CONTROL

or until by some means they obtain knowledge of a better way. Thus a large amount of birth control is experimental and bound to have a great degree of failure.

The idea of birth control is widespread, but familiarity with the best methods of contraception is still limited to favored individuals. It follows that there are a considerable number of unwelcomed pregnancies, a most important fact for the unmarried who seek sex freedom to remember. It is also true that if birth control methods could be as freely discussed as the subject itself, the proper methods of contraception would be more generally known and the records of success increased. This does not mean that clinics always advise the same birth control method for all who come to it, for individual needs and differences have to be recognized in contraception as in everything else, but it is true that certain methods are more successful than others and that the clinics never advise some methods widely practiced by those who have only hearsay information.

SEX IN MARRIAGE

Science has not, in the opinion of many, yet developed a perfectly satisfactory method of contraception. It has been greatly hampered, especially in the United States, by religious opposition to birth control and by restrictive legislation. The progress that has been made in the efficiency of contraception in spite of these great obstacles makes it unsafe to assert that perfect birth control cannot be achieved.

The reader of this book, however, is interested in the fact that the records at present show that those who do use contraceptive precautions do not meet with the complete success that they desire. Dr. Hamilton's *Research in Marriage* is the study of a sophisticated group of frank husbands and wives. Their statements with reference to contraception reveal the experiences of an especially favored group. One of his questions was whether or not the people studied had always had a safe way of avoiding pregnancy. Eleven men and ten women were uncertain. Only thirty-one men and thirty-seven women of the hundred men and hundred women said without res-

BIRTH CONTROL

ervation that they had always had a safe contraceptive method.

In a study that I have been making of the experiences of persons who also belong to a group that would be likely to have more information regarding the methods of contraception than the average person, the record of these people up to the present time has been that 166 have used contraceptives, 39 have never made any effort artificially to control pregnancy. Of those who have tried to avoid pregnancy by the use of contraception 123 state that they have been completely successful, 30 that they have been partially successful, 4 that they are uncertain whether or not they have been successful, and 8 that they have absolutely failed. One of the 166 who had used contraceptives failed to state whether or not she had been successful in preventing pregnancy.

When we turn to the reports of the birth control clinics, we get the most reliable information and without question a higher percentage of success in the use of contraceptives than that obtained else-

SEX IN MARRIAGE

where. This is due to the care with which instruction is given and the following up of the cases. The Clinical Research Department of the American Birth Control League of New York City reports, for the year 1925, ninety-five per cent success for all the methods recommended and ninety-six per cent for the technique usually advised. This last figure, ninety-six per cent, is considered a fair summary of the results of that clinic for the preceding five years. Numbers of the women served are foreigners who understand English but imperfectly, while the group as a whole is entirely unselected in regard to intelligence and responsibility. The report of the Chicago Clinic of the Illinois League covers the period from 1924 to 1927: of 1087 cases in which the method advised was used 968 were successful and 119 resulted in pregnancies. At the Los Angeles Mothers' Clinic 1057 cases were advised with these results: 147 pregnancies were reported and 910 successes. This figure of 86.1 percentage successful is somewhat lower than it otherwise would be because during the first six months several methods were

BIRTH CONTROL

experimented with and during this period a larger number of pregnancies occurred.

Fifth, What are the motives of birth control? Doubtless the most common motive comes from the desire to have the pleasure of sex intercourse without the risk of pregnancy. Along every line man has enriched his experience by controlling conditions of nature so as to increase his comforts and his satisfactions. Birth control represents another effort by man to use artifice as a means of getting more pleasure than if there were no control of our natural processes. The pleasure philosophy of life has been encouraged by the advance of science. The practice of contraceptives is one of its expressions. It permits the separation of sex from reproduction, so that there may be a great deal more sex intercourse than would be possible without frequent pregnancy for all except those who are unnaturally sterile.

Another motive is a motive of health which is recognized by legal justification of the use of contraceptives in some of our states. There are people who cannot have children without running the risk

SEX IN MARRIAGE

of death; for example, a woman who suffers from serious heart trouble. There are others who are chronically ill or who have a morbid family history so that the birth of a child is not justified. People who have tuberculosis or a serious family history of mental disease are examples of those who claim that they ought not to have children, but should not be denied the pleasure of sex and marriage.

Another very common reason for birth control, especially in the early years of marriage, is the economic motive. Those who use contraceptive methods on account of economic pressure usually look forward eventually to having children. In some cases at least the possibility of birth control encourages a delay of parenthood with the expectation that this temporary policy will be given up as soon as economic circumstances become easier. In the case of a person starting a profession there is a special temptation to avoid the having of children, when it seems as if the coming of a child would make impossible the preparation that the profession requires. Nevertheless, it is a matter of experience

BIRTH CONTROL .

that many who finally wish children find that they cannot have them. Whether they could have had them at an earlier time is of course in the individual case usually a matter of opinion. It seems reasonable, however, to assume that the fertility of many is greater at the earlier stage, and that if they had not postponed the coming of children they would in the natural order of things have become parents. In any case young people who enter marriage need to realize the risk of postponing too long the coming of children.

The reasons for early pregnancy are many. Child-birth is commonly thought to be less dangerous and less painful, but there is no certain evidence regarding this. The habit life of the family is usually more easily adapted to the child if it is not too long maintained on the basis of the companionship of husband and wife. Then, as some forget, if the child's coming is postponed for many years, the father and mother find themselves too much older than their children and run the risk of not living long enough to see them enter maturity.

SEX IN MARRIAGE

Another motive for contraception is the desire to place the coming of children so that one will not follow another too closely. For the sake of the health of the child, as well as for the maintenance of the mother's health, it is the opinion of many that a child should not come to the ordinary home oftener than once in three years. It is also true that the modern woman cannot be merely a mother of children; many demands are put upon her, and successful sex life requires that she keep alert in ways that make it possible for her to be a good companion to her husband. The use of contraception makes this program much easier to carry out than before the vogue of birth control.

Sixth, Why are methods of birth control not discussed in this book? No book written for popular reading can give a description of the methods of birth control without violating a law passed in 1873 by the influence of Anthony Comstock, founder of the Society for the Suppression of Vice. If this book gave any description of methods of contraception it would be by the act of Congress passed in 1909

BIRTH CONTROL

classified as obscene literature and unmailable, anywhere in the United States.

Knowledge of contraception has now become so widespread in America in all classes that the problem whether or not concrete advice shall be given is more significant than it once was. It is no longer a question whether the people shall be told that there are methods that give considerable control of conception, but rather, Shall they be told specifically the best that science knows regarding contraceptive methods? It at least needs to be known that at present there is no contraceptive method that does not involve the risk of an unsought pregnancy. The very fact that birth control has become so well known, while at the same time there is less appreciation of the care necessary in its technique to avoid failure, encourages some unmarried young people to run risk of an unwanted pregnancy when, if they knew the true state of affairs, many of these young men and women would not accept the danger of their sex code, but would seriously turn their faces toward legal marriage.

CHAPTER X

SEX AND LIFE

MUCH has been said in this book about sex pleasure and the opportunity the newly married have to make sex a source of abounding satisfaction. Such counsel is in accord with the normal impulses of those who are about to enter marriage or who are tasting its fruits in the springtime of matrimony. It is not at all strange that young people starting marriage should have such keen interest in its physical aspects. There should be no feeling of shame because of this concern in sex. If it were not present, the onlooker familiar with human experience would have misgivings as he saw the unawakened individual or the person devoid of sex motives entering matrimony.

Important as sex in its physical aspects is, this is not the whole story. Sex, like everything else in life,

SEX AND LIFE

can be taken narrowly and superficially or broadly and made to yield all that it has to give. It is so easy to become victimized by physical sex that all counsellors of youth stress the dangers of sex selfishness. He who enters sex experience always goes to judgment, his very soul laid bare, and the test is exceedingly simple in the form it takes. If there be any element of indifference to the other person's welfare, if sex be something snatched for personal pleasure with no regard to the effect it has upon the other, then he who abuses his opportunity restricts his sex pleasures to those possible on the lower level. Nothing in life offers greater ease of exploitation than does sex. Since it is by nature a mutual experience, it is good only when it is beneficial and pleasure-giving to both individuals. By being indifferent to the partner any one can make it a self-confined activity that immediately loses its flavor. The danger of sex exploitation must not be thought confined to the unmarried, for matrimony is devoid of any magic power to turn a self-seeker into a lover and make sex supremely coöperative. Of course, we nat-

SEX IN MARRIAGE

urally think of prostitution whenever the idea of exploiting sex comes to mind. This is because of our repugnance to the very thought of selling what no right feeling person could bear to commercialize, and our realization that the willingness to traffic in sex intimacy shows how terribly the inner life of the prostitute has been mutilated. If she sought vengeance for her tragedy she would need to do nothing more than she accomplishes when she trains the male who buys her service to think of sex as something that can be satisfactorily had without its being accompanied by mutual regard and affection.

Important as it is, therefore, to make sex prominent in early marriage, a matrimonial experience cannot be wholesome if it be built merely upon mutual body attraction. With the wear and tear of life such a marriage crumbles, because it has insufficient substance. It cannot develop from its early beginnings because it has no inner vigor to make growth possible. Marriage under such circumstances is a mere legalizing of sex intercourse, precarious

SEX AND LIFE

because of the thinness of the common interest of the husband and wife.

When we look at sex on a higher level than merely a pleasure-giving appetite we discover that it may have a large place in wholesome development of personality. To achieve an affection that brings one in the closest contact possible for humans, in sex intercourse, is to go onward in life according to the natural order. To bring this out in clearness one need only notice the tragedy faced by those who never have opportunity to achieve this experience or are too ill-prepared when it comes to them to make good use of it. Those who for any motive go through life unacquainted through personal experience with the delight of a successful matrimonial union built upon affection suffer loss of a human need, inferior to no other.

It is not strange that the protest against this deprivation should be so strong as to lead some to think of sex fulfillment during the earthly career as a right which the individual should be expected to claim. Unfortunately it makes no difference what

SEX IN MARRIAGE

one demands, there is no method by which love can be furnished to those who come claiming their rights. It would be easy, of course, by merely revising the moral code that has developed to protect sex values, to invite promiscuity, but this would only make it all the clearer that the tragedy is not in the mere denying of physical experience of sex, but in the failure to achieve affection and to incorporate physical sex as an instrument of love.

It is hardly fair, therefore, to think of those who do not marry, but who, if they met the right man or woman, would eagerly enter matrimony, as martyrs to the prevailing sex code. The tragedy goes down deeper into the very essence of life. The real value of every human experience comes out most clearly when we see the meaning of its being denied. This is true of health, of education, of social achievement, but of nothing is it more true than of marriage. If society were more concerned with the sacrifice of those who should but do not marry, men and women would be so trained that the tragedy of the single life would come more often to those who have little

SEX AND LIFE

to give in matrimony and who want little, rather than to those who have much to give and whose needs are great.

Human nature never shows itself more conscientious or more sacrificing than when deliberately and without bitterness the single life is accepted in order that service may be rendered which marriage would prohibit, or when wedlock is refused because of personal health or family history, but the maintenance of the single life for these high motives never reveals fully the tragedy of the unmarried. There are a multitude of women who, were their sex appetites early awakened and their deepest human desire to marry faced squarely before they are temporarily captivated by lesser interests, would marry with more promise than many of those whose precocious expression of sex and concentration upon the getting of a mate brings them to the wedding altar. It is true that there are compensations, that all the joys of life do not issue from a normal sex experience. Nevertheless, and here is the heart of the problem, for the healthy man or woman wholesome mar-

SEX IN MARRIAGE

riage proves good for body and for mind, giving both members of the union an intense and beneficial pleasure and the richest comradeship possible.

So much has been necessarily said thus far concerning the individual and his sex life that the reader may suppose that there is no other meaning to sex. Nothing could be more unfortunate. Because sex means much to the individual it also has a social significance, second to nothing else in life. In addition to this there are certain social aspects of sex altogether independent of the individuals who through it obtain mutual satisfaction. Thus sex has both a personal and a social aspect and there has never been, so far as we know, any human society that has been utterly indifferent to the social meaning of sex experience. Indeed, sex has had such social consequences that its regulation has become one of the great necessities whenever any group of men and women have lived together. More than this is true. We can trace from the early beginnings of social life the great fear that was felt regarding sex

SEX AND LIFE

on account of the power it had to influence human conduct.

Part of this fear has centered about the risk of undesired children for whom there would be no responsible father. This is not the only reason that has led society to guard, by taboo and by law, sex relationship. Because of its impetuous nature and the opportunity it offers for exploitation, sex needs self-control and a sense of social responsibility. This cannot be assumed of all individuals, and therefore the group has always had to take in hand the regulation of sex conduct, sometimes loosely, sometimes minutely, but always with great strictness at the point where it believed individual sex practices endangered the social good. As we look backward to savage experiences we recognize that many of these notions were foolish, based upon ignorance of biology, a misinterpretation of the laws of heredity, or ignorance regarding reproduction, but, however wrong the form of the regulation, some control has always been exercised.

In our time great changes have come and seem to

SEX IN MARRIAGE

be coming with reference to various aspects of sex. In part this is due to the passing of fear of illegitimacy as birth control practices become more widely known and assurance of their reliability grows stronger. It does not seem reasonable to charge all the changes to this one important departure from the past, since sex regulation is always influenced by social conditions and they are now changing in so many ways that it would be impossible for sex not to be affected. It is felt by those fearful of the consequences of our sex transition that the end of the present trend is to be sex individualism carried to the utmost. Welcomed by some, this to others appears the greatest of all social catastrophes.

There is not the slightest reason to suppose that any society will tolerate absolute individualism in sex. Regulation has always come primarily from public opinion and from legislation. Of these the former is much the more important. Under any social situation selfishness in sex will intrude and sooner or later its consequences will force public opinion to recognize dangers and to protect as far

SEX AND LIFE

as possible, by standards and codes, the greater good of the group as a whole.

If the thinking and feeling of people were in our time moving backward toward more and more physical sex satisfaction with less and less concern for affection, a code of conduct might issue that would be less exacting in its attempt to curb sex selfishness and exploitation. But the momentum of life is in the opposite direction. Indeed, so strongly does the current move that there has already arrived a separation in the code itself, leading on the part of some to considerable liberality in physical sex by itself, so long as it does not include a love relationship. Out of experience, again, the lesson is being learned that these two aspects of sex cannot be kept separate, that what happens on the lower level sooner or later has consequences for the upper.

However differently people interpret the loosening of the former ethical code of controlling sex, there should be rather general agreement that there are evidences already at hand which indicate that this movement is not to end in the elimination of social

SEX IN MARRIAGE

control of sex conduct, but rather in the reconstructing of public opinion to adapt it to modern needs and the changing circumstances of our ways of living, by bringing in more exacting standards rather than sex license. As contraception removes some of the prudential motives that in the past have regulated conduct, this will invite selfishness to attack wholesome sex life by attempting substitutes for affection. Just as soon and just as clearly as this is generally recognized, public opinion will respond by frowning upon irresponsible, selfish pleasure-seeking in sex.

It would be a most unfortunate start of marriage for any one to suppose that the legislation that safeguards marriage has been inflicted upon human nature by powerful overlords for the motive of killing joy. From human experience comes this demand that sex be socially recognized by the institution of marriage. Legislation is always sensitive to the influences of contemporary life, and changes from time to time in the attempt to adapt itself more thoroughly to human needs. Its purpose in our time is to

SEX AND LIFE

provide affection with the commitment and security it craves.

In a recent letter a friend who has the habit of sounding life at its depths writes that for a time it seemed as if sex as she experienced it in her marriage could offer the complete fulfillment of life that thoughtful people have always been asking for, but that with the passing of time sex also seems partial and incomplete. This she describes as the "illusiveness of sex." It happens that in her matrimonial career sex is passing from the large place it formerly held to a minor position, and affection, as expressed in the fellowship of mind and work, has taken the van. Such an experience can be viewed as an illustration of the failure or limitation of physical sex, which lacks the resources to grow in meaning with individual development. From this point of view sex is much like the color or fragrance of the flowers that attract bees, merely that by this process fertilization and reproduction of plant life may go on. There are famous writers who have voiced their protest against the illusive quality of sex and the disappointment it

SEX IN MARRIAGE

finally brought. For them sex is a sort of tricky net in which nature attempts to catch those it wishes to perpetuate the race. Pleasure is present, but this is incidental. In time the individual awakens to the fact that he has been used by nature, even when he supposed that he was merely satisfying himself. True indeed this is, but true only on the lower levels of physical sex.

No one gets very near to the deeper meaning of sex unless he sees that man has enlarged what at first was merely a means of reproduction and made out of physical attraction a craving and a satisfaction which reflect better than anything else what we call human in contrast with the merely animal. Sex has been so multiplied, so intensified, and so enriched that it is impossible for physical intercourse by itself to yield what the imagination anticipates from it. It fails because human desire has outrun it. In this sense sex by itself is a small thing, not because it is more meager in human experience in our period of time than it has been earlier in human history or in the simpler experience of the animal.

SEX AND LIFE

Even physical sex has been enlarged so that it is more pleasure-giving than it ever has been. In spite of this, mere physical sex is a small thing when it stands by itself, in comparison with its values when incorporated in that intensity of personal relationship which we call love or affection. As a means of reproduction one sort of intercourse is as significant as another; when thought of as a means of human satisfaction, the contrast between physical sex in its narrowest terms and sex as a part of the communion of the husband and wife in affection is greater than any other human achievement that may be compared with mere animal endowment.

For many centuries social coercion has been more strongly directed against the sex conduct of women than of men. Whether this accounts for the greater significance of affection in the sex life of women than of men no one knows. It is fair to assume that the freedom that men have had to seek physical satisfaction under conditions, as in prostitution, where there was no intimate relation of sympathy or regard, has led to a slower development in their love

SEX IN MARRIAGE

life. Of course it is true that many writers express mere sentiment in their discussion of the love needs of women. Putting that all aside as of no consequence to us, no one can know many marriage tragedies or have even a reading knowledge of psychoanalytic literature without coming to feel that the great majority of women crave affection in a sex commitment beyond any other longing, and that being deprived of love creates in their innermost life a void which nothing else completely fills. This conclusion comes, of course, not from what they say but from actually observing the restlessness, the discontent, the bitterness, and the emotional instability clearly tied up to an emptiness of life because love has not come to them.

Nothing is more illuminating as to the root of the trouble than the attempts that are made to interpret this need as merely a body demand for physical sex intercourse, because it is thought the pleasures of sex can remove from consciousness the craving for affection. Whenever women of strong sex feeling turn aside from their major quest and accept

SEX AND LIFE

the counsel that leads them to go to physical sex for relief, they soon either develop affection for the man with whom they are intimate, or the disillusionment of sex without affection makes them feel more strongly than ever the losses from which they suffer.

It is true that sex is such a normal experience for healthy men and women that the body itself protests against celibacy, but experience demonstrates that this cannot be thought of as the essential problem of the woman who craves love. If she narrows her love demands so that satisfaction can be promised on the mere level of physical sex, she generally repudiates her acceptance of the lesser gift and in the end her protest against a life without love becomes all the stronger. The difference between men and women at this point can easily be exaggerated. At best the generalization is a clumsy one, for there are great differences between men and men, and between women and women. The well-developed male personality is doubtless not at all different from the female in finding that mere physical sex cannot fulfill the needs of love.

SEX IN MARRIAGE

The meaning of this to those who marry is that sex cannot be wholesome unless in it is included that deeper feeling which makes both the man and woman cleave only unto each other. It is only when affection takes command that we have wholesome sex life. This consolidation of physical sex with the most intimate fellowship of feeling and thought is the mark of a true marriage. The difference between sex separated from affection and an affection that includes sex appears in every act of coitus. The distinction is simple but subtle in its meaning. He who is content with mere sex thinks of taking something from the other. With that spirit he comes to the act of coitus. He who is expressing love as well as having sex pleasure enters the intimacy with the attitude of one doing something with the other. In the former experience one individual becomes the mere instrument of pleasure for the other. In the love-controlled coitus, fellowship rather than subordination gives quality to the experience.

The living together of husband and wife who have completely consolidated affection and sex is in all its

SEX AND LIFE

various aspects enriched by love. It is this that makes the difference between a home, where intimacy ranges over the entire field of human relationships, and a mere refuge for the privacy required to carry on sex intercourse. The sex act partakes of the atmosphere that surrounds it and is never at its best outside the fellowship that makes a home. Sex harmony radiates into the home and mutual sympathy increases the satisfactions of intercourse.

Although for the sake of clarity in this discussion distinction has to be made between sex and reproduction, there is need now to recognize that intercourse and parenthood have been linked together by nature itself and we must not forget their alliance. In the past, parenthood has been taken for granted by those who have consciously realized the meaning of marriage. In our times there is temptation to regard parenthood as a limitation of sex pleasure and to feel that in so far as sex satisfaction can be had without involving parenthood we have stolen a march on nature and gotten more than she bargained for. Parenthood is wrongly thought of as a

SEX IN MARRIAGE

rival of sex pleasure or a penalty put upon those who marry. Like wholesome sex life, it is also a fulfillment of human need. It is true that nature has to depend upon sex intercourse as a means of keeping the race alive, but it is equally true for great multitudes of men and women that they need for their best development the coming of children, just as surely as nature needs their coöperation for the perpetuation of the race.

Any one experienced in dealing with human behavior knows that the showering of affection upon the child is sometimes used as a substitute for intimacies that belong to the relationship of husband and wife, but this does not happen where wholesome sex has been achieved. It is also a great error to suppose that the child's coming permanently draws out from the intimacy of husband and wife some of the love capital which they had gathered for their domestic undertaking. The child does not subtract affection, he multiplies it, by giving both father and mother a deeper basis of understanding and a more solid sympathy. The newly married

SEX AND LIFE

must see clearly the risk of trying to prevent sex from following its natural course, leading to parenthood. The overcautious and the selfish always suffer losses. This is true in matrimony as it is elsewhere. It may seem easier without children, until the full need of the normal man and woman is plumbed to its bottom. When this is done the great majority of husbands and wives will add to their satisfactions as love-mates if also they become fathers and mothers. Although one should not seek children because of one's emptiness of life, in parenthood one increases personal experience, enriching every sort of worthy satisfaction, and at the same time one also lives in the life of the child. Thus the parent if he wills it has a double grip upon life that comes to him through his own experience and also through that of his children.

In a former chapter emphasis was laid upon the seasonal character of sex. In the earlier years it runs at full vigor, so that at the commencement of marriage it occupies a prominent place in fellowship. With the oncoming of years the fund of common in-

SEX IN MARRIAGE

terests increases and sex no longer holds the chief place in the relationship of husband and wife. If parenthood in due time appears it also adds another tie that holds closer together the man and the woman.

In any case, time itself makes decisive changes in the sex life of men and women. By the mere passing of years the woman is brought to what we know commonly as the change of life, the menopause, when she loses power to reproduce and structural changes take place in her sex organs. Sometimes this comes to the woman gradually without much difficulty as sex vigor fades away. Rather often the experience is disturbing, both physically and mentally; at times the upheaval is so great that the personality itself appears different, and in rare cases a temporary insanity develops.

The darkness of this picture can easily be overcolored. Although it is a time of stress for a great majority of women, it does not for most of them carry the penalties that are described in medical literature. These represent the extreme. Much de-

SEX AND LIFE

pend upon the attitude of the woman herself. Where there has been wholesome fellowship and life has been enriched as man and wife have gone on hand in hand through life, the menopause does not bring the regrets and the terror that come to those who feel that life has been bitterly disappointing. There is nothing so true of sex as that everything is good in its season. In the late forties the average woman is ready to turn aside from reproducing and rather welcomes, once she has made the stormy passage, the change that comes. It is not true that sex is so involved with this change that necessarily it also passes with the power of reproduction.

Men, also, as they go on in life reach years where sex vigor begins to diminish, and finally for most of them entirely passes. Being generally more gradual than in the case of women, this change usually carries less emotional tension, and sometimes brings what is called the Indian Summer of sex experience. The old man becomes unnaturally fond of young women or even girls and has intense sex desire, even though sex satisfaction be denied him. It is well to

SEX IN MARRIAGE

know of these extreme difficulties of final sex adjustment, but they must not be thought of as the usual and therefore the expected thing in the life of old men. We do not know how far these morbid accompaniments to the passing of reproduction are related to early sex experience and to what degree they express a protest against an unwholesome sex life, but it seems reasonable to assume that he who makes wise use of his resources during the first half of marriage meets with serenity the final decline of sex vigor. Those who commit themselves from the first to the achieving of wholesome sex life in their married relationship will carry their program to the end, and without wishfully looking backward will cling to memories as the most precious fruitage of their life together as they face nature's destiny and prepare each to travel a separate way to the life beyond sex.

BOOKS SUGGESTED FOR ADDITIONAL READING

PROBLEMS OF MARRIAGE OUTSIDE SEX:

Wholesome Marriage. E. R. and G. H. Groves. Houghton Mifflin Company. Boston.

SEX PHYSIOLOGY:

An Introduction to Sexual Physiology. F. H. A. Marshall. Longmans, Green and Company. New York City. Recommended for those who wish additional information on the physiology of sex.

PREGNANCY:

A Doctor's Letters to Expectant Parents. F. H. Richardson. W. W. Norton and Company. New York City. A most helpful and authoritative discussion for both husbands and wives.

Mother and Unborn Child. S. R. Meaker. Williams and Wilkins. Baltimore. A more complete and less popular presentation.

BIRTH CONTROL:

Motherhood in Bondage. Margaret Sanger. Brentano's. New York City. An impressive argument for contraception.

Birth Control and Eugenics. C. P. Bruehl. Wagner. New York City. One of the best of the arguments against contraception, authorized by the Roman Catholic Church.

SEX IN MARRIAGE

SEX PROBLEMS OF MARRIAGE:

Problems of Human Reproduction. Paul Popenoe. Williams and Wilkins. Baltimore. This excellent book is recommended for those who wish a supplementary discussion of sex in marriage.

SOCIAL PROBLEMS OF MODERN MARRIAGE:

The Marriage Crisis. E. R. Groves. Longmans, Green and Company. New York City.

MASTURBATION:

A Study of Masturbation and Its Reputed Sequelae. John F. W. Meagher, M.D. William Wood and Company. New York City.

